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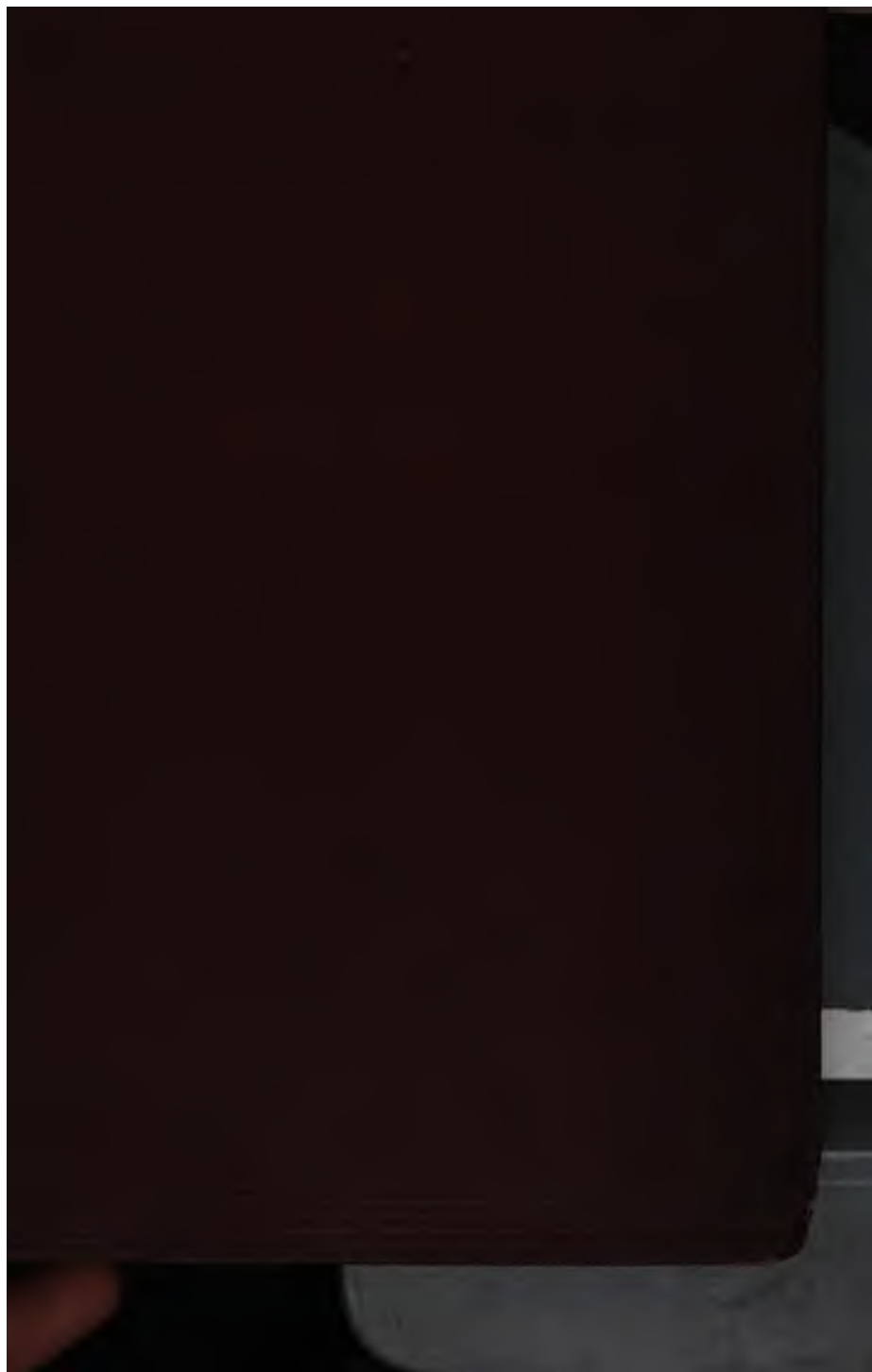
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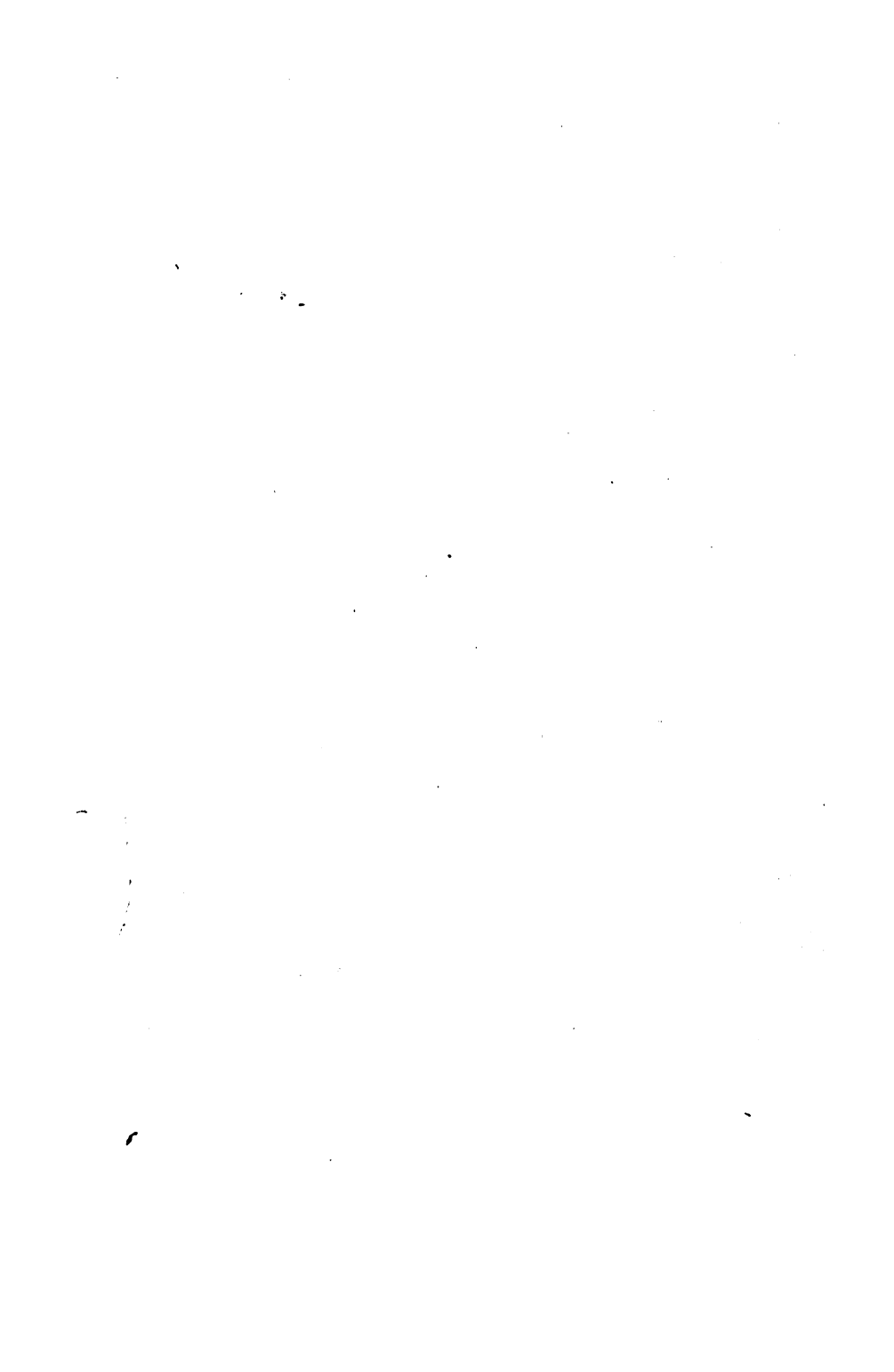
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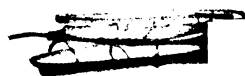




The Development of  
Australian Literature

(Turner)

NDV





# The Development of Australian Literature

BY

HENRY GYLES TURNER AND  
ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND

*PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATION*

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

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1898

*F.W.P.*



TO OUR WIVES  
**We Dedicate this Book,**

TO THE READING PUBLIC

WE COMMEND IT,

TO THE CRITICS

WE SUBMIT IT WITH BECOMING DEFERENCE.

A. S.  
H. G. T

*September 1897.*





## PREFACE

AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE begins to assume some definiteness of form. Though still of utter immaturity, it is gathering a certain individuality of its own, and asserts its usefulness in its own department and after its own fashion. During half-a-century it has had of necessity to be judged entirely by an alien standard, the test being always what the English reader was likely to think of it, what an English critic would be inclined to say of it.

But now, less frequently do we ask what other people have to say about Australian literature; we are growing more and more concerned to know what it is that Australian literature has to say to ourselves. And, of a certainty, we begin to realize that its writers, though their rank is far from the very highest, have a power of raising in Australian minds emotions that are peculiar, and agreeable, and such as are not elsewhere by us to be attained.

This is especially true in the domain of poetry, which must always eventually be judged only by

its capacity to awaken emotions. No matter what the technical excellences of verse may be, if it kindles no feeling in the breast of the reader, it is poetry to sight only, and not to the heart. But, on the other hand, we may meet with verses that have manifest defects, defiant now of grammar and again of prosody, yet none the less with power to rouse our minds to noble, or tender, or eager emotions. We feel that, though with technical perfection they might even better fulfil their function, yet essentially they are poetry, and poetry whose rank is determined by its capacity to stir our emotional nature.

Clearly, then, the reader has to bring to his reading of poetry, fully as much as the poet had to bring to the writing of it. The skill of the one is of little avail if in the other there is no emotional capacity for being moved. That capacity is, at basis, an inheritance of race, but in superstructure, a growth dependent on experience. The average Anglo-Saxon will, by virtue of his blood, exhibit a general tendency to be touched by poetry or music, but the surroundings of his boyhood will determine what poetry or what music is most profoundly to touch him.

To him who is Australian by birth and exclusive residence, the most musical description of scented hawthorns and nightingales warbling through the twilight dusk will waken but a far-off emotion. On

the other hand, he is full of reminiscences of by-gone days in his life when over the balmy mildness of the early spring there wafted in floods the delicious odour of the golden wattles, or of the undulant pittosporums, which made his lungs heave high to draw in the fullest draught of their fragrance. Treasures, therefore, of delightful emotion lie latent in his breast all the year through, to be revealed in a moment by him who has skill with phrase or line to recall in rapid vividness those beauteous days that are all too few in the year.

“In the Spring, when the wattle-gold trembles,  
    ‘Twixt shadow and shine ;  
When each dew-laden air-draught resembles  
    A long draught of wine.”

How many are there in Australia who can look back to joyous times of youth when the pig-skin seat in which they sat has swayed with exhilarating movement beneath the stride of a gallant animal, while the breeze of its motion tempered deliciously the warmth pouring down in floods from the spotless dome of blue, and the sward of a wide run flew past like a flash beneath, while the wide horizon every minute visibly moved forward its travelling circle. The writer, whatever be his technical skill, who can vividly recall to these that early joy is felt by them as a poet.

Hence, to the Australian heart there may be much that is of moving appeal in verses that to

others seem only bald and commonplace, or rude and colloquial. But the growth of a large population possessed of these experiences, ready to be touched by these and analogous emotional effects, must inevitably bring strength and eventual maturity to a national literature. Australia has now nearly four millions of native-born population to whom a great deal must be second-hand that is most delicious to the Englishman in the descriptions of the national poets.

Not that there will therefore arise any great tendency to exclude the greatest of our Anglo-Saxon literature. That which is truly noblest deals with a human nature everywhere fundamentally the same; so that the words of an Elizabethan poet still can appeal with unabated force to the experience of men in far-off Australia. Our literature is not something which can supplant; folly, if doubly distilled, could frame no idea more absurd. But its service will be to supplement, and perchance in minor departments replace the magnificent body of writing to which our lucky stars destined us to be heirs. So, while we have our Shakespeare societies, our Browning clubs, though men still retain their deepest ardour for their Shelley, their Wordsworth, or their Tennyson, still there is something that Gordon and Kendall and Marcus Clarke can say to us which others are unable to hear. An English reader may dip with a certain curiosity into the works of these

writers and award them a stinted measure of chill praise, but the Australian, as he reads, has no thought of praise or of criticism. He feels his heart burn within him as he proceeds, and therein is the poet justified, more than in acres of laudatory reviews.

Australia has most assuredly produced no genius of the great calm healthful type. Her writers have, as a class, been ill-balanced in mind, and therefore have had more or less unhappy careers, or else they have bewailed at heart the woes of exile from the homes of early childhood, which, seen through the tenderly deceitful light of the dawn of memory, make the transplanted poet encourage a melancholy view of his new surroundings. Thus our literature has many sad notes in it, and not a few that are morbid. Still we may claim that, such as it is, it now is gathering power to speak to the hearts of millions, and with the weight and importance it is thus acquiring, there comes an increasing curiosity to know the story of its development, and the personal careers and characters of its chief writers.

It is to minister to this natural curiosity that the present volume has been published. These lives of Marcus Clarke, A. L. Gordon, and Henry Kendall appeared in brief form long years ago in the *Melbourne Review*. More recently those of Gordon and Kendall were expanded to form a series of ten articles in the *Australasian*; and these have been

again enlarged, in the hopes that all three may become the more or less permanent biographies of the chief writers Australia has yet produced.

To these there is prefixed a general sketch of the development of Australian literature, so far as it has yet proceeded. It is the story of a childhood that may yet be valued as the preliminary to a strong and robust manhood, and the authors have taken all possible pains to make it accurate.

# CONTENTS

## I. A General Sketch of Australian Literature

By HENRY G. TURNER

	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY ... ..	17
II. POETRY ... ..	31
III. FICTION ... ..	78
IV. GENERAL LITERATURE ... ..	107

## II. A Biography of Adam Lindsay Gordon

By ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND

I. HIS BOYHOOD ... ..	124
II. FIRST AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCES ... ..	146
III. IN PARLIAMENT ... ..	162
IV. GORDON AS A POET ... ..	178
V. IN BALLARAT ... ..	193
VI. IN MELBOURNE ... ..	207
VII. HIS LAST DAYS ... ..	224

## III. A Biography of Henry Kendall

By ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND

I. HIS PARENTAGE ... ..	238
II. EARLY LIFE ... ..	250
III. IN MELBOURNE ... ..	266
IV. HIS FINAL YEARS ... ..	280

## IV. A Biography of Marcus Clarke ... 300

By HENRY G. TURNER



## PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATION

J. BRUNTON STEPHENS	...	...	<i>To face page</i>	54
ADAM LINDSAY GORDON AT THE AGE OF				
THIRTY	...	...	..	124
RUINS OF A. L. GORDON'S COTTAGE AT				
GLENELG	...	...	..	168
HENRY KENDALL AT THIRTY-FIVE	...		..	238
HENRY KENDALL AT TWENTY-FIVE	...		..	263
MARCUS CLARKE	...	...	..	300

## PREFATORY NOTE

SOME portions of each of the three 'Biographical Notices' have already appeared in print. They have each been revised and considerably extended for this volume. The attempt to define the growth and present position of Australian Literature is now published for the first time.



# THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

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## A GENERAL SKETCH OF AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

### CHAPTER I.—INTRODUCTORY

ACCORDING to Mr. G. B. Barton, the first book printed and published in New South Wales was a treatise 'On the cultivation of the Vine, and the art of making Wine,' by one James Busby. It was published in 1825. It fell dead from the press, because, though a learned compilation, it contained nothing of any value to guide the colonists in the proposed new field of enterprise, and in addressing the limited and busy population of that period it was undoubtedly a quarter of a century too soon. Many books about Australia, and some books written by persons resident in Australia, had been published before that date, but they had all been issued in Great Britain.

Pass over fifty years, during which period hundreds of volumes of prose and verse, covering the fields of History, Science, Oratory, Politics, Fiction, and Theology, had emerged from the local press, and had attracted little notice outside the circles immediately interested.

At the end of that period—say in 1875—Australia was in every sense, except the commercial one, practically an unknown quantity in England. Any one visiting the old country about that time, with perhaps some exaggerated notions of the greatness of the Colonies in which their lot had been cast, could not fail to observe the absolute indifference with which the British public regarded the remote community in the Southern Seas, and even the absence of a desire to know anything about it. The leading journals, with their columns of cabled news from every other part of the world, rarely had a message of any kind from Sydney or Melbourne. The occasional meagre letters from their local correspondents were severely confined to tariff revisions, the price of wool, and the yields of gold. At the first-class London hotels the visiting Australian was not always regarded with unmixed trust, and his comfort and convenience had to be subordinated to better customers—even as on the P. and O. mail steamers he had to take a back seat when the Indian passengers required the front ones.

A few years later, and all this was changed. The first great International Exhibition held in Melbourne in 1880-81 brought to these shores a number of distinguished visitors and enterprising

business men from all parts of Europe, and from that year the interest in the Colonies grew with increasing momentum. And this growing interest culminated in England in 1886, the year of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition at South Kensington, in a perfect furore of admiring friendliness, which made the name of "An Australian" a passport into society, a talisman to open the doors of exclusive Clubs, and which caused the crowds of more or less representative Australians to be lionized to their hearts' content.

It must be admitted that the intellectual development of the Colonies had little or nothing to do with arousing the enthusiasm thus expressed. Undoubtedly the visits of the various cricketing teams, and their phenomenal success, had done more than anything to pave the way for it, and the reputed opulence and lavish expenditure of many of the visitors was not without its effect on the British public. For they were thus generally made aware, for the first time, that the outposts of Greater Britain were not necessarily places of exile for the "ne'er-do-wells" of the mother land, but that they possessed a population kindred to themselves in the pursuit of pleasure, in money-making, and in general ability. Why should they not have much in common in Art and Literature? A small coterie of Australian writers who had settled themselves in England, conceived the happy idea of answering this question by turning the fervour to account, in the interest of their brethren of letters, and for the glorification of the colonists generally.

Mr. Douglas B. W. Sladen and Mr. Arthur Patchett Martin were the prime movers in this attempt to show how, in far-away Australia, where there was no counterpart of that European class that combines wealth, leisure, and intellectual culture,—where, indeed, the whole community, in one sense or another, worked for its living,—even here there were some sweet singers who could give vocal utterance to the “divine discontent” of their race, and some storytellers rich in power, in pathos, or in humour. Mr. Sladen confined himself chiefly to the poets; Mr. Martin combined with them novelists and prose writers generally, and their ranks were subsequently strengthened by the accession of Mr. Haddon Chambers, who represented the Australian Drama *in esse*, greatly to the profit and delectation of some leading theatrical managers.

It is not for one moment intended to imply that this was the beginning of an Australian literature. It had long before been sown in widely sundered patches of good soil, scattered here and there throughout a region of uncongenial surroundings, and amidst a community whose immediate prosaic needs blunted the keen appreciation of that form of beauty which requires the calm of contemplative imagination for its discovery. But this was the period of its efflorescence, in a new hemisphere, where readers with leisure and readers with trained judgment might be numbered by millions. In the making of books, London is undoubtedly the apex of the world, and the courageous persistency and unwavering faith with which Messrs. Sladen and Martin proclaimed

the gospel of Australian writers bore fruit. It captured the attention of the press, especially the newer magazines, and publishers laid themselves out to meet the demand. The weekly and monthly periodicals began to canvass for Australian tales and sketches, and found that quite a number of colonists, resident in England, could provide them with excellent copy; and many small volumes of the type of 'Oak-boughs and Wattle-blossoms' emerged continuously from the press.

It was but a few years before that the London *Athenæum*, in response to an appeal from Henry Kendall that it should devote an article to the recognition of an indigenous Australian literature, said: "This we should be prepared to do, were the materials at command sufficient for the purpose; but with only Mr. Moor's volume, Mr. Kendall's manuscript, and a few poor extracts from the poems of Mr. Charles Harpur, we can form no clear idea of what Australian poetry is, or is likely to become." But now Adam Lindsay Gordon, Brunton Stephens, and Henry Kendall were quoted like household words in English newspapers; and Marcus Clarke, 'Rolf Boldrewood,' Mrs. Praed, and 'Ada Cambridge' were in steady demand at Mudie's and the other great London libraries.

Unfortunately, but probably unavoidably, under cover of the demand which had been created, many unworthy representatives sneaked in. A gory compilation of melodramatic impossibilities, entitled 'Ned Kelly, the Iron-clad Bushranger,' thrilled the great unwashed,—and one of the worst of Melbourne



stories, from a literary point of view, 'The Mystery of a Hansom Cab,' is said to have attained a circulation of over a million copies, and was dramatized to boot.

Despite these drawbacks, however, the very acceptable anthologies of Australian poetry, edited by Mr. Sladen, had awakened an interest in those circles that make or mar the literary aspirant, and the best things that Australia had produced received a generous recognition alike from the critics and from the reading public.

It is to be feared that this loyal tribute paid to what was really good was regarded by the colonial community as embracing the whole field of their literary efforts. This mistaken attitude was fostered by the local critics, and while ministering to our self-complaisance, led to a renewed activity without stimulating to further development. Very injudicious praise of any local product, merely because it was local, had a deadening effect upon quality, and Australian reviewers have much to answer for in the effect of their too often meaningless laudation.

But it is well to attempt, before surveying what has been accomplished, to define firstly what properly constitutes Australian literature, and, secondly, what is implied in the term Australian author.

At the outset it may be said that from the point of age, and for the period of growth, all comparisons would be fallacious. It has sometimes been alleged that the American Colonies were two centuries old before they produced a writer whose work claimed attention, while Victoria, before it

reached the half-century, had contributed to the world's libraries hundreds of books worthy to live, The answer is that the latter period (1835—1885) was a time of quickening intellectual development, of widely-spreading education, of enterprising journalism, of facilities of travel that brightened the intellect and widened the sympathies, and, above all, of peace and material progress. The former period (1620—1820) covered an era of struggle against civil and ecclesiastical tyranny, of hard fare and harder work, of war savage and civilized, and, in the earlier stages at least, of a desperate wrestling with relentless nature for the right to live. It was no time for writing stories, or meditating in verse, though it was by no means unproductive in the fiercest of polemics, and in occasional political satires that sometimes cost the writer his ears. But this period of hard probation bore goodly fruit. When the time came wherein men could settle down to write, they had many stirring themes on which to dilate. Probably the finest romance of the century, 'The Scarlet Letter,' would not have been written without these antecedents, and the literature of America to-day is enriched by the effect of its stern Puritan training, in a manner that gives it a distinctive national quality quite its own.

Now, if we eliminate from our calculations the unlvely youth of New South Wales and Tasmania, when the population consisted largely of expatriated offenders and their official custodians, and take, as a point of departure, the date of the settlement of Port Phillip and South Australia, we

have a period of about sixty years to deal with. On the whole it has been a period of steady progress numerically, socially, and commercially. There have been spasmodic outbursts of prosperity, as in the gold discoveries, and these have been corrected by periodical occurrences of retrogression, but the general tendency has been forward. The output of the mines, the price of wool, and, in later years, the yield of wheat, have been the commonplace figures on the barometer by which we gauged our well-being. Except for the consideration of some constitutional questions connected with self-government, and as an object lesson of the growth of democracy, our history is powerless to evoke enthusiasm. What is there in such a state of things to inspire the poet, to stimulate the imagination of the creator of romance, or to call forth the efforts of a colonial Motley or Macaulay? In short, how is a national literature to be expressed that has no nation behind it?

Some of the most fervid outpourings of eloquence, on which excited crowds hung with red-hot enthusiasm, drew their inspiration from such subjects as anti-transportation,—the unlocking of the lands,—the digger hunting for licences,—or the pinchbeck glory of the Eureka stockade. Set forth in cold print, now that all these temporary wrongs have been peacefully rectified, they provoke a smile at the tempestuous whirl of words that played round such comparatively unimportant issues.

But, even if our history had been pregnant with the sublimest material, instead of being hopelessly

commonplace, we have, by the very nature of our surroundings, been precluded from developing the local Motley or Macaulay, and have had perforce to put up with the prosaic McCombie, the industrious but commercially-minded Westgarth, the partisan egotism of Dr. Lang, or the weary voluminousness of the indiscriminating Rusden. For it must not be forgotten that, outside the large army of active and generally very capable journalists, we have not yet got any men or women in Australia living exclusively by the product of their pens. And when it is considered with what redundancy the vast output of European literature finds its way to our shores; how even a rigid selection of the very best of the magazines would absorb far more time in their perusal than the average intelligent colonist can possibly spare, it ceases to be a surprise that no one is willing to devote labour and talents to the production of what the community may decide it has not time to look at.

Bluff old Samuel Johnson said : " The greater part of an author's time is spent in reading in order to write ; a man will turn over half a library to make one book." This implies a state of things apparently not compatible with our present environment, and consequently while we have so far risen above the dull routine of our daily business, yet the flights into the alluring regions of poetry and romance have been made as a sort of side excursion by those whose daily occupation took some more homely form.

Let it not be for one moment supposed that this statement is meant to imply, that because there are

no professional bookmakers amongst us, the resulting product is "amateurish" in the sense of depreciation. Much of it is distinctly better than the great bulk of the work for which the regular caterers for the London market get well paid. But the incidence of its production is against its recognition as national literature.

Until such a national spirit is developed, as it will be unless the traditions of our race suffer decay, we must be content with the production of a local literature, essentially English in its characteristics, but moulded by climatic and scenic surroundings into a form that gives it sufficient distinctiveness to justify the term Australian. If we are content to dismiss the influential part which the nobility and aristocracy play in English fiction, the social material for the ordinary novel is much the same in Melbourne as in London. And it is greatly to the credit of Australian fiction that, so far, it has generally been healthy, clean, and optimistic. So much is perhaps due to the fact that, taken all round, Australians are a cheerful and hopeful race, as might be expected from our brighter climate, and our proneness for outdoor amusements.

Notwithstanding Marcus Clarke's declaration that the dominant note of Australian scenery is "weird melancholy," it certainly has not shed an aspect of gloom over the majority of our fiction writers. Nor have they, for lack of material, yet descended to the depths wherein Grant Allen and Sarah Grand are groping, or to the unclean realism of George Moore, and the many English imitators of Zola's earlier writings.

Hence in our fiction, and in our poetry, the characters described and the subjects treated are the common property of mankind, the same that have served all previous writers, differentiated only by the novelty of their immediate surroundings, and by the greater or less creative skill with which they are presented. Granting then that Australian literature may be defined as only a localized version of our great English heritage, it remains to indicate the sense in which the term Australian author is used.

If the title is to be rigorously limited to those who have been born in the Australian Colonies, we at once cut off, not only an absolute majority in numbers, but nearly all of those in whose writings we take the greatest pride. Some compromise is necessary, and it is a reasonable interpretation of the term to make it include, with the native-born, all those writers who have settled amongst us in early life and grown into their full powers under the influences which make for the distinctive character of Australian work; who have, in short, drawn their inspiration from their physical, social, and intellectual environment.

This discrimination would legitimately entitle us to claim Mrs. Humphry Ward, but since her brilliant career as a novelist is associated entirely with her English life and experiences, and as none of her writings deal with the land of her birth, we must regretfully deprive Australian literature of the added lustre which her name would bestow. With 'Tasma' the case is different, for her fertile pen continues to draw much of its inspiration from reminiscences of these southern lands, despite the more brilliant

surroundings in which her lot has been cast. It will, however, shut out from our field of survey men like Henry Kingsley, whose 'Geoffrey Hamlyn' is one of the most delightfully Australian specimens of all local fiction. But his visit to the Colonies was comparatively brief, and his reputation as a novelist was made in other fields, after his return to England. It deprives us too of 'Orion' Horne, whose literary fame was established before he came to Victoria, and whose Australian work indeed was somewhat indicative of senile decadence. And a score or two of others may be ignored, who, as the result of flying visits to the Colonies, have utilized their hastily acquired knowledge as the material for Australian sketches, too frequently tinged with prejudices born of half-understood facts. These people have been with us, but are not of us : therefore in selecting the names of those whose writings are to be considered, the limitation will perhaps be best expressed by saying that only those who have made their home in Australia will be classed as Australian authors.

Probably the most bitter critic of Australian culture was the late Francis Adams, who, in what he called a social sketch, 'The Australians,'<sup>1</sup> says : "To treat of culture in Australia, in the sense that one does of the greater European capitals, would be like treating of the snakes in Iceland. Disinterested study is unknown in a country where every one is still in haste to gamble, grab land, or create a business." With this text he proceeds throughout three hundred pages to pour out the vials of his

<sup>1</sup> London, 1893.

cynical wrath on all and sundry, with an invective that rivals Max Nordau in fierceness, and surpasses him in coarse imputations of senility and incapacity. He condescends to hesitating words of praise of Adam Lindsay Gordon and Marcus Clarke, even going so far as to say that the former's 'Rhyme of Joyous Garde' is "the one great poem yet written in Australia." But for all the rest of the community, from Ministers of the Crown to school-boys, he has nothing but sneers and detraction. As against this ill-tempered onslaught we have the good word of some score of visitors, of superior literary status to Adams,—from Moncure Conway to David Christie Murray,—who are all ready to admit that in the more settled centres of colonial life there are abundant indications of an appreciation of intellectual work, and at least the signs of a desire to aid that work by local and original effort. This is as much as can be fairly claimed or reasonably expected. It will be the aim of these pages to show to what extent the foundations have been laid.

In attempting a summary of what has been accomplished, it will be noted that Gordon, Kendall, and Marcus Clarke are left out of the review, their work and their careers having been so fully dealt with in other chapters of this volume.

It would be impracticable, within any reasonable space, and useless if practicable, to attempt to mention all Australian writers who have ventured to print their effusions. A selection will be made under the respective heads of Poetry, Fiction, and General Literature. This covers a wide ground



## AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE

eatment must be necessarily incomplete. so leave untouched a vast array of cons, racy of the soil, which have been d throughout the columns of the better f journals, and which, if collected and usly edited, would probably be found to have e genuinely Australian flavour than many of aposing volumes of recognized writers.

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## CHAPTER II

### POETRY

THE industrious and versatile Douglas B. W. Sladen, who has himself written about a dozen volumes of verse, published in London about ten years ago two anthologies, one called 'A Century of Australian Song,'<sup>1</sup> devoted exclusively to poems inspired by life and scenery in Australia, and the other 'Australian Poets,'<sup>2</sup> devoted to what the editor considers the best poems by Australian writers, irrespective of subject. Necessarily there is some duplication in these two volumes of six hundred pages each, but allowing for this, the fact remains that there are one hundred and nine authors, eighty-three male and twenty-six female, whose writings are quoted as worthily representing Australian poetry for the delectation of the British critic. Surprising as this fact may be for people who are disposed to regard us as a prosaic and money-grubbing community, whose temperament is graduated by the price of our products and the state of the share market, it falls far short of the actual fact. On the shelves of the Melbourne

<sup>1</sup> London : Walter Scott, 1888.

<sup>2</sup> London : Griffith, Farran and Co., 1888.

Public Library, where some of the more feeble songsters get an aspect of robustness from being bound up in the same covers with half-a-dozen incongruous companions, there are nearly two hundred and fifty separate publications of what is catalogued as Australian poetry, and the collection is admittedly incomplete. It goes without saying that a large portion of these volumes cannot offer any reasonable excuse for their appearance. Indeed some of them are such fearful trash that even the printer must have had misgivings at taking the price of his work from the conceited egotists who employed him. But there are little verdant oases, even in this wilderness, where genuine poetic aspiration and cultured poetic insight work together for good, and blossom into sweet song. The exigencies of space and the brevity of human life alike demand that most of these flowers must continue to blush unseen in their dusty habitat, while the task of selecting the score of names most worthy to be put in evidence is one from which a modest critic may well shrink. To render such selection less invidious, it will perhaps be found most suitable to take the Colonies separately, looking first at New South Wales.

‘The First-Fruits of Australian Poetry,’ by BARRON FIELD, a Judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, was privately printed in Sydney in 1819, and four years later was published in a popular form for general circulation. Field was an intimate friend and steady correspondent of “the gentle Elia,” and when he sent his preposterous verses to London, under

such a high-sounding title, Lamb actually reviewed them favourably, and induced other friendly critics to bring them into notice. This was a very unfortunate introduction for Australia, for it may safely be said that, having regard to the educational advantages of a professional man, it would be difficult to find anything in Australian verse more hopelessly deficient in every attribute of true poetry. Following closely upon Field came the measured dignity of W. C. WENTWORTH; the religious commonplaces of DR. LANG; and later, the first feeble flickering of the lyrical tendencies of SIR HENRY PARKES. In 1853 CHARLES HARPUR published a volume containing a five-act play, and some miscellaneous poems. The play is poor stuff, but some of the separate poems show that a true singer had at last arisen. Enthusiastic admirers have dubbed him the Australian Wordsworth, but although his strength lay in that communing with nature which marked the "Lake School," his somewhat deficient education, and his limited range of language, prevented him attaining the success which his ambition essayed. He shaped his Muse in various forms, sonnet, ballad, and lyric; but his strength lay in blank verse. 'The Creek of the Four Graves' is without doubt his best poem, and evidences considerable power both in narrative and description. The strong point in Harpur's poetry, with perhaps the single exception of 'The Tower of the Dreams,' is its invariable simplicity. His tone is solemn and earnest, and whether in telling a story or pointing a moral, he is never involved, his thoughts being directly and clearly expressed. There is ample evi-

dence that he felt what he wrote, hence if there is little polish, there is no artificiality in any of his work. In the latest edition of his poems (Melbourne, George Robertson, 1883), the editor says that they have been revised, in many cases with the last corrections by the author's own hands, but that in some cases the editor, whose name is not disclosed, had supplied those final revisions which the author had been obliged to leave unmade. The fine poem referred to, 'The Creek of the Four Graves,' has been very materially altered since it first appeared in 1853. It would be interesting to know whether this was the work of the author or editor, for while the rearrangement of lines, and substitution of more musical phrases for others, make on the whole for elegance, it is somewhat at the cost of the rugged strength of the original. And further, there are some passages entirely omitted, to which the most fastidious critic could hardly have taken objection. Mr. G. B. Barton is unjust to Harpur in saying that in striving to emulate the lofty flights of Wordsworth he failed, because he grasped at objects placed beyond his reach by nature, and left behind him those he might have attained with ease. Surely a poet is not to be blamed for aiming high, and if Harpur was an aspiring disciple of Wordsworth, he was not in any sense a plagiarist, for his thoughts are his own, and the philosophy which animated the Bard of Rydal is the common property of all reflective minds. Several of Harpur's Australian successors have sung his requiem,—none perhaps more feelingly than Kendall in the following extracted lines :

\* \* \* \* \*

"And far and free this man of men,  
With wintry hair and wasted feature,  
Had fellowship with gorge and glen,  
And learned the loves and runes of Nature.  
Strange words of wind, and rhymes of rain,  
And whispers from the inland fountains,  
Are mingled in his varied strain,  
With leafy breaths of piny mountains.

But as the under-currents sigh  
Beneath the surface of a river,  
The music of humanity  
Dwells in his forest psalm for ever.  
No soul was he to sit on heights  
And live with rocks apart and scornful :  
Delights of men were his delights,  
And common troubles made him mournful.

The flying forms of unknown powers  
With lofty wonder caught and filled him :  
But there were days of gracious hours,  
When sights and sounds familiar thrilled him."

\* \* \* \* \*

To the same period as Harpur belong the productions of LIONEL MICHAEL, a lawyer, in whose office Henry Kendall served some five years as a clerk, and to whose generous interest in, and sympathy with, his aspirations the latter bears grateful testimony.

Michael was a man of extensive reading, and of an undoubted poetical temperament, and some of his lyrical pieces in the 'Songs without Music' (Sydney, 1857) show a refined taste, if not much originality. His principal work, 'John Cumberland' (Sydney, J. R. Clarke, no date), is a narrative poem of over two hundred pages, in the autobiographical form, into

which almost every known form of metre is introduced, with rather confusing rapidity of change. Except for the intellectual exercise there is no reason why the story should not have been equally well told in prose; and though there are occasional passages of poetic thought, gracefully expressed, they are overlaid with so much commonplace detail as to be hardly worth the trouble of digging out.

For a quarter of a century the Muse of New South Wales was either slumbering, or gathering herself for a supreme effort by the voices of her later singers. Perchance the inrush of population in the Fifties, and the consequent upheaval of social, political, and commercial interests, drove the contemplative faculty out of men's minds. Whatever the cause, it is certain that, excepting Kendall's poems, there were no local publications of verses worthy to arrest attention, until well into the last twenty years of the century. MR. PHILIP J. HOLDSWORTH, an officer of the Civil Service of New South Wales, who for several years was an acceptable contributor of poetry and sketches to the local journals and magazines, published a small volume, entitled 'Station-Hunting on the Warrego, and other Poems' (Sydney, 1885), which shows considerable versatility of style, and in some of the minor pieces a melodious faculty of rhyme. But he is strongest in blank verse, and the title poem, albeit a little inclined to be hysterical, contains some very powerful descriptive touches. There is one remarkably fine short poem in this volume, though not dealing with an Australian subject. It is entitled 'France in 1870'—the year of

the German triumph—and it has all the inspiring swing of martial music, without the taint of any Jingoistic element; a highly-wrought picturesque invocation which should command a prominent place in any collection of national ballads.

MR. THOMAS HENEY has published two volumes: 'Fortunate Days' (Sydney, 1886), and 'In Middle Harbour, and other Poems' (London, 1890). In the former 'The Hut on the Flat' is apparently the most sustained effort. It is the story of a saturnine old shepherd, who hates his fellow-men, living alone for years, who one night gives shelter to a wanderer apparently dying of privation. In a half-delirious state the stranger promises to recompense him from money in his swag, and the shepherd hopes that he will die. When he is recovering, the thought that the sick man will take his money away with him is too much for this horrible recluse, and he brains him with an axe and buries him under the bunk. The horror and remorse of the old villain, when he is found some time later by one of the station hands at his last gasp, is powerfully told, and his dying shrieks that "he didn't do anything with it" give quite a creepy feeling to the reader. But it was a serious error of judgment to put such a story into the unyielding hexameter metre, or, having adopted that metre, to have tried to bend it to the incongruous triviality of some of the descriptions. It is essentially the dress of dignified ceremonial,—of deeds of martial prowess, or tumultuous human passion. To apply the majestic style of Homer to such a description as the following is to court failure:



\* \* \* \* \*

"Under the window, unglazed, and closed with a strong wooden shutter,

Stood his table, uneven and rudely made of deal casing,  
Supported on saplings short that sunk in the earth of the floor :

He had made it himself ; between table and fire-place a camp-stool.

Beside the window his cupboard was placed, a gin-case nailed to the wall ;

On it rested some pipes, and a bushman's various trifles ;  
Scattered about the hut were his simple household utensils,  
And save himself and his dogs, in the place was never a living creature."

\* \* \* \* \*

The later volume shows signs of improvement. 'A Squatter of '68,' though cast in a rather trying metre, gives a most graphic picture of the horrors of a drought, and the animal as well as human suffering which attends it. 'Found Dead' is an attempt to build up a life's history from some faded photographs found amongst the effects of a man perished of thirst in the back country. It is full of a restrained pathos, without any tinselly sentimentality. 'In Middle Harbour,' though giving the title to the volume, is by no means the best, being an account of a picnic with suitable reflections ; but 'The Boundary Rider,' 'Pioneers,' and 'In the Lignum' are all picturesque in treatment and musical in form, if somewhat wanting in force.

In 1877 there was published in London a small volume, 'The Balance of Pain, and other Poems,' by 'Australie.' They were the work of the daughter of Sir William Manning, sometime Chief Justice of

New South Wales, afterwards well known in Sydney literary circles as the wife of Mr. Henry Heron, a solicitor of Sydney, to whom she was married in 1873. Although most of these poems were written while 'Australie' was quite young, they evidence a maturity of judgment, a purity of style, and a felicity of expression that have not been surpassed by any Australian singer. It is true that the title poem, 'The Balance of Pain,' does not succeed in offering any satisfactory solution of the unanswerable problem of the existence of Evil, but it treats the question in a trustful reverential spirit, quite touching in its pathetic submissiveness, which is probably worth more as a sustaining power, in the face of the inevitable, than reams of argument. A deep religious feeling runs through most of the poems, as in 'Two Children and Two Fates,' 'The Quiet Dust,' 'Nearly,' and 'The Angel's Call.' In the narrative and descriptive verses she has caught and reflected the characteristics of Australian scenery as faithfully as Kendall, but with an air of cheerfulness to which he was a stranger. 'The Explorer's Message,' 'The Weatherboard Fall,' and 'The Two Beaches' give ample evidence of a genuine power of graphic touch.

MR. G. ESSEX EVANS came later on the scene, his volume, 'The Repentance of Magdalene Despar,' having been published in London as recently as 1891. The title poem, written in the metre and with an occasional suggestion of 'Locksley Hall,' is a story of intense power, the passionate self-upbraiding of a woman whose overwrought conscience

drives her to suicide, as the expiation of her wrongdoing.

The heroine of the story, a child in age and experience, is married to a man of fifty with a very vague realization of what marriage means :

“Four long years in cloud and sunshine lived we by the restless sea,

Where each day was as another, in its calm monotony ;  
But my heart was changing slowly, and I felt with secret pain  
Friendship take the place of Love, where only Love itself  
should reign.

Was it only woman's fancy made me think him cold, austere—  
Till I felt the love I bore him tempered with an unknown  
fear?

Was it that my heart rebellious scorned that grave and  
courteous air,

Longing for a wilder spirit, with more fire to do and dare ?  
Wrapt in cares of which he spoke not, tho' his smile was kind  
and mild—

I, a wife, with woman's longings, to be treated as a child !  
So I nursed my wrongs in silence, musing o'er my wounded  
pride,

Till a barrier grew between us, whom no barrier should divide.  
Often in those days I fancied I could hear those words of  
truth :

Youth—not age with fifty winters—should be wedded unto  
youth.”

The one child of the union, that forms the chiefest bond between them, dies when three years old, and the inconsolable mother is struck down by illness and rages in fever and delirium : then—

“Weak and ill at last I wakened from that dark and dismal  
night,

But the world seemed changed around me and the sunshine  
lost its light ;

And the springs of Hope were withered, and Love's flame  
had ceased to burn,

And I knew a power had left me, that would never more  
return.

Changed I was, my love grown colder, vivid fancies thronged  
my brain,

Forms and faces hovered round me, and I turned from them  
in vain ;

And a madness fired my spirit, till I could not bear the place  
Haunted by the tender memory of one little childish face.

So at last we sold the station, left that wild and rugged shore,  
Changed the calm of Nature's fastness for the busy city's roar ;

For the years had made us wealthy, richer far than those we  
met,

And I longed for some excitement that would teach me to  
forget.

\* \* \* \* \*

Was it only sorrow drove me to those scenes with folly rife ?

Or the thought of something missing in the lottery of life ?

Who shall read a woman's secret ? or divine what women  
think ?

One kind word perchance had saved me, when I trembled on  
the brink.

But his coldness numbed my spirit, and I moved unto my fate,  
Love first changing into friendship, friendship changing into  
hate.

Well I knew my beauty lingered as a theme on every tongue,  
And I learnt to love the homage of the men who round me  
hung,

Till the thirst for admiration at last became a daily need—

Ah ! what misery in the sowing of that single deadly seed !

\* \* \* \* \*

Drinking of the wine of flattery till its fumes had turned my  
brain,

Thinking only of the worship of the fools who thronged my  
train,

Conquest but succeeded conquest when all bowed beneath my  
spell,

Till in all the pride and splendour of my vanity—I fell."

The weary years that follow, the tortures of remorse, the ghosts of days that are past, and the blank hopelessness of the future are told with consummate power; and the closing scenes of the repentance should stir the most rigid purist to pity.

'John Raeburn' is another strong poem in this volume. Amongst the lyrical pieces the 'Lines on Longfellow,' 'The Shepherd's last Sleep,' and the 'Ode on the Australian Centenary' are admirable in their direct simplicity of construction and musical cadence. As a specimen of the national spirit pervading his verse the following 'Federal Song' may be quoted as far above the average of the numerous outpourings on that subject:

"They lay the stone whose eyes may never see  
 A nation's turrets rise above the plain.  
 They sow the seed who may not reap the grain ;  
     Futurity  
 Will bless that toil which wrought thro' stress and strain  
     Her Unity.  
 It yet shall be. Build on, and heed not scorn ;  
 Build fair and strong a nation's towering height ;  
 In massy grandeur weld her scattered might  
     By schism torn.  
 After the Darkness and the Dawn's grey light  
     Cometh the Morn.  
 Build on ! Build on ! Hold with a nerve of steel,  
 Above all meaner pride, and jealous hate,  
 That higher faith, which makes a nation great.  
     They rightly feel  
 Who take for the broad basement of the State  
     The common weal.  
 Build on ! Build on ! Deep-pulsing thro' the land,  
 Thro' all this island continent there stirs  
 A throb, a voice she feels, and knows is hers ;

From strand to strand  
A whisper stealing thro' the Dawn avers  
The hour at hand.  
Build on ! Build on ! E'en as the restless blue  
Circles her sleeping mountains, silence bound,  
Our hope, our faith, our love shall gird her round  
With fealty true,  
Whilst from the old world wrecks, which strew the ground,  
We build anew."

There are a few poems in the volume which it may be assumed the author's riper judgment will reject when a new edition is called for, but on the whole the book is a genuine accession to Colonial literature, with the true ring of poetic fancy, melodiously expressed.

But the poetry of ten years ago is now as little in evidence in New South Wales as the plays of Shakespeare are on the Australian stage. Messrs. Angus and Robertson, with an enterprise somewhat uncommon in publishers, and with a sagacity that has been crowned with great success, have, in American phraseology, filled the bill, by the introduction of a quartette of singers, some of whose writings have had a phenomenal circulation, and who are, in the estimation of young Australia, entitled to the topmost pinnacle in the temple of poetic fame. A. B. Paterson, Henry Lawson, John Farrell, and Edward Dyson all graduated in the same school, that of Journalism, and the *Sydney Bulletin* was their nursing mother. There is a certain similarity of style running through the whole four, and, though they frequently view the same subject from a totally opposite standpoint, the influence of Adam

Lindsay Gordon, of Bret Harte, and of Brunton Stephens is on them all.

In these days of cheap literature it is somewhat surprising to find a small volume of verse published at five shillings selling to the extent of fifteen or sixteen thousand copies within a couple of years. It probably exceeds the combined sale of the volumes issued by Gordon, Kendall, and Stephens, who have been before the public fully twenty years. The explanation suggested is that Paterson's verses deal so largely with horse-racing and kindred sports that they appeal forcibly to young Australia, who is undoubtedly much given to sport. But that very enthusiasm for sport makes him, as a rule, indifferent to the pleasures of forming a library. Hence it is difficult to guess where these books have gone to ; because they are hardly of sufficient permanent value to take their place beside the standard poets on the book-lover's shelves.

JOHN FARRELL, if not the originator of the style, is at least the senior of the little band, and his fame was so widely spread in New South Wales ten years ago as to justify the publication by subscription of his book 'How he Died, and other Poems.' It was held that in the vigorous colloquial verses, wherein he recounted the doings of impossible station-hands, and the other shadowy denizens of the back blocks, he had struck a new lode in the mine of the Muses. But, though the piece that gives the title to the book is quite as good as any of the work of his later compeers—and one or two of the minor poems rise to a much higher level—it did not com-

mand a sufficient success to carry it into a second edition. Messrs. Angus and Robertson announce a new volume of Farrell's as nearly ready, which, in their capable hands and neat typographical dress, may have a better chance of being widely circulated.

Of 'The Man from Snowy River, and other Verses,' by A. B. PATERSON (Sydney, 1895), it may be said that from cover to cover it is distinctly and unvaryingly Australian verse, in the sense that it deals with topics, characters, and scenery peculiar to this part of the world,—sometimes with such intensely local handling as almost to necessitate a glossary for English readers. Mr. Paterson has a ready command of language, a happy knack of directness in telling a story, a rollicking fund of humour, a vigour of expression, and a felicity of rhyme that captures our interest, if it fails to rouse our enthusiasm. Truth to tell, there is not much in his subjects to justify enthusiasm. They are pictures drawn from the life, with just that judicious touch of exaggeration that is necessary to give dramatic force to a commonplace incident or character. Take as a sample of his condensed suggestiveness the last three verses of 'Jim Carew'; there is material for half-a-dozen cantos in the picture :

'Gentleman Jim in the stockman's hut  
Works with them, toils with them, side by side ;  
As to his past—well, his lips are shut.  
'Gentleman once,' say his mates with pride ;  
And the wildest Cornstalk can ne'er outdo  
In feats of recklessness Jim Carew.

What should he live for? A dull despair !  
Drink is his master, and drags him down,



Water of Lethe that drowns all care—  
 Gentleman Jim has a lot to drown ;  
 And he reigns as king with a drunken crew,  
 Sinking to misery, Jim Carew.

Such is the end of the ne'er-do-well  
 Jimmy the Boozer, all down at heel ;  
 But he straightens up when he's asked to tell  
 His name and race, and a flash of steel  
 Still lightens up in those eyes of blue—  
 'I am, or—no, I was—Jim Carew.' ”

But the three or four little pieces that come nearest to evidencing the poetic faculty, such as 'Lost,' 'On Keley's Run,' 'In the Droving Days,' all of which have a tinge of pathos, are not the verses which make him popular. The best-told story in the book is 'Conroy's Gap,' shorn, as it purposely is, of anything like heroism or romance. But young Australia has been captivated by the humour with which he tells horsey stories, and 'Old Pardon, the son of Reprieve,' 'Our New Horse,' and the 'Idyll of Dandaloo' are perhaps the best samples of his undoubted capacity in that direction.

It is noticeable that although in these verses he is trenching on the province of which Gordon was the undoubted master, his treatment of the subject is quite different. Gordon's horsey stories are all redolent of praise of the animal hero, but Paterson's contagious humour is evolved from the scoundrelly tricks and cheatings of the human element in the sport. The delicious unstudied fun of the situation in the 'Idyll of Dandaloo' is irresistible, and has the added merit of being nearer to fact than to fiction.

HENRY LAWSON'S 'In the Days when the World was Wide, and other Verses' (Sydney, 1896), aims occasionally at a higher level than is reached by Paterson; but he is a long way behind him in the healthy aspect of humour. The tone of the bulk of his verses is that of cynical discontent—a sustained denunciation of the classes as opposed to the masses—and a glorification of the good old days. Indeed his pessimism is so profound, that he seems to build all his hopes of improvement on a good rousing war, apparently he is not particular with whom—or, failing that, the red flag of rebellion and anarchy!

"And so 'twill be while e'er the world goes rolling round its  
course,  
The warning pen shall write in vain, the warning voice grow  
hoarse,  
But not until a city feels Red Revolution's feet  
Shall its sad people miss awhile the terrors of the street—  
The dreadful everlasting strife  
For scarcely clothes and meat  
In that pent track of living death,—the City's cruel street."

This is not a cheerful outlook for the average citizen who likes shelter for his wife and children, and it is not surprising that a man who cherishes these expectations of reform for the community does not shine as a humorous singer.

In 'The Poets of the Tomb,' those bards of tears and vanished hopes come in for such severe castigation, that one pictures the writer as a man bubbling over with cheerfulness, whereas the general feeling of hopelessness which most of the verses display, is so strong as to leave the reader with a severe sense of depression. Indeed nearly all the

pieces with a humorous intent, not only lack the cheerful pleasantry of Paterson, but have a certain fierce coarseness that jars upon the laugh they were intended to create. But, despite these defects of temperament,—possibly even by reason of them,—he has written some verses with the genuine fire in them, quite distinctly better than any which either Farrell or Paterson have published. 'The Star of Australasia' rises higher into the region of poetry than anything else in the book. Some of the sentiments may not be acceptable, but it rings like a national ballad, as the following extract will show :

"There are boys out there by the western creeks, who hurry  
away from school  
To climb the sides of the breezy peaks, or dive in the shaded  
pool,  
Who'll stick to their guns when the mountains quake to the  
tread of a mighty war,  
And fight for Right, or a Grand Mistake, as men never fought  
before ;  
When the peaks are scarred and the sea-walls crack till the  
furthest hills vibrate,  
And the world for a while goes rolling back, in a storm of  
love and hate.  
There are boys to-day in the city slum, and the home of wealth  
and pride,  
Who'll have one home when the storm is come, and fight for  
it side by side,  
Who'll hold the cliffs 'gainst the armoured hells that batter a  
coastal town,  
Or grimly die in a hail of shells when the walls come crashing  
down.  
And many a pink-white baby girl, the queen of her home  
to-day,  
Shall see the wings of the tempest whirl the mist of our dawn  
away—

Shall live to shudder, and stop her ears to the thud of the  
distant gun,  
And know the sorrow that has no tears, when a battle is lost  
and won,—  
As a mother or wife in the years to come, will kneel, wild-  
eyed and white,  
And pray to God in her darkened home for the men in the  
fort to-night.”

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Again there is both power and pathos in the realistic tragedy ‘Out Back.’ No halo of romantic adventure, no rhapsodies on Nature, but a grim story of her relentless impassibility in the face of human struggle.

“He tramped away from the shanty there, when the days  
were long and hot,  
With never a soul to know or care if he died on the track or not.  
The poor of the city have friends in woe, no matter how much  
they lack,  
But only God and the swagman know how a poor man fares  
Out Back.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

And dirty and careless and old he wore, as his lamps of hope  
grew dim ;  
He tramped for years till the swag he bore seemed part of  
himself to him.  
As a bullock drags in the sandy ruts, he followed the dreary  
track,  
With never a thought but to reach the huts when the sun  
went down Out Back.  
It chanced one day when the north wind blew in his face like  
a furnace breath,  
He left the track for a tank he knew,—’twas a short cut to  
his death ;  
For the bed of the tank was hard and dry, and crossed with  
many a crack,  
And oh ! it’s a terrible thing to die of thirst in the scrub Out  
Back.”

It is not given to many poets to turn and rend their critics in verse after the fashion set by Lord Byron, but Mr. Lawson is apparently not indifferent to public opinion, and he has rather weakly given himself away in the verses on 'Australian Bards and Bush Reviewers.'

EDWARD DYSON'S volume, 'Rhymes from the Mines, and other Lines' (Sydney, 1896), is a bright and cheerful collection, in which the humour has none of Lawson's savage cynicism, but is quaintly suggestive and delicately handled. 'Bashful Gleeson' and 'A New Girl up at White's' are favourable specimens of this form, and 'Since Nelly came to live along the Creek' is a little bush idyll. There is considerable power in some of his descriptive pieces, notably in 'The Rescue,' and 'When the Bell blew up'—both of them stirring and graphic sketches of mining disasters. 'Peter Simpson's Farm' is a story that must come home to many a defeated selector, who has seen the toil of half a lifetime, in wresting a home from the wilderness, defeated and brought to nought by the insignificant little rodent who flourishes when all else decays. The dogged pertinacity and cheerful courage with which Peter grapples with misfortune commands our admiration, but the universal Australian nostrum that is slyly introduced into the last verse is very realistic:

"He is old too soon and failing, but he's game to start anew  
And he tells his hopeless neighbours 'What the Gov'ment  
*going to do.*'

Both his girls are in the city, seeking places with the rest  
And his boys are tracking Fortune in the melancholy West

Perhaps the strongest piece of writing in the volume is 'The Prospectors.' It has a resonance well in keeping with the deeds of the bold adventurers it chronicles. In choice suggestive language, in vivid descriptive touches, and in the marching swing of its rhythm it deserves a front place. A couple of verses will show its quality :

"We go pushing on when the mirage glints o'er the rim of the  
voiceless plain,  
And we leave our bones to be finger-posts for the seekers who  
come again.  
At the jealous heart of the secret bush we have battered with  
clamour loud,  
And have made a way for the squatter bold, or a path for the  
busy crowd.  
We have gone before through the shadowy door of the Never,  
the Great Unknown,  
And have journeyed back with a golden pack, or as dust in  
the wild winds blown.

\* \* \* \* \*

We are common men with the faults of most, and a few that  
ourselves have grown,  
With the good traits too of the common herd, and some more  
that are all our own.  
We have drunk like beasts, and have fought like brutes, and  
have stolen, and lied, and slain,  
And have paid the score in the way of men,—in remorse, and  
fear, and pain.  
We have done great deeds, in our direst needs, in the horrors  
of burning drought,  
And at mateship's call have been true through all to the death  
with the Furthest Out."

Some of the minor poems show Dyson's mastery of a quiet unobtrusive pathos, and 'The Old Whim Horse' is a good specimen of that quality where it is not all tears.

It is amusing to compare the opinions of these three writers on the delights or otherwise of Bush Life.

Thus Paterson sings :

"As the stock are slowly stringing, Clancy rides behind them  
singing,  
For the drover's life has pleasures that the townsfolk never  
know.  
And the bush hath friends to meet him, and their kindly  
voices greet him  
In the murmur of the breezes and the river on its bars,  
And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended,  
And at night the wondrous glory of the everlasting stars."

Whereunto Lawson fiercely rejoins :

"Sunny plains ! Great Scott ! those burning wastes of barren  
soil and sand,  
With their everlasting fences, stretching out across the land !  
Desolation where the crow is ! Desert where the eagle flies,  
Paddocks where the lunny bullock starts and stares with  
reddened eyes ;  
Where, in clouds of dust enveloped, roasted bullock-drivers  
creep  
Slowly past the sun-dried shepherd, dragged behind his  
crawling sheep.  
Stunted peak of granite gleaming, glaring like a molten mass,  
Turned, from some infernal furnace, on a plain devoid of  
grass.  
Miles and miles of thirsty gutters—strings of muddy water-  
holes  
In the place of shining rivers, walled by cliffs and forest boles.  
Barren sedges, gullies, ridges ! where the ever-madding flies,  
Fiercer than the plagues of Egypt, swarm about your  
blighted eyes !"

And Dyson takes up the theme with his more  
genial humour :

"If it's fun to travel cattle or to picnic with merinoes,  
Well, the drover doesn't see it—few poetic raptures he knows.  
As for sleeping on the plains, beneath 'the pale moon'  
always seen there,  
That is most appreciated by the man who's never been there.  
And the 'balmy air,' the horses, and the 'wondrous  
constellations,'  
The 'possum rugs, and billies, and the tough and musty rations,  
It's strange they only please the swell in urban streets  
residing,  
Where the trams are always handy if he has a taste for  
riding."

There can be no doubt that these later singers have, in the selection of their topics, and in the colloquial freedom with which they have handled them, struck a responsive chord in the taste of the community.

The explanation of this outburst of popularity, so promptly obtained, is to be found in the fact that, whatever our scenery may be said to be, we as a community are not addicted to melancholy, and that the great bulk of the people of Australia take intense delight in being amused. They love excitement and change, and they delight in something new, in politics, on the stage, in the pulpit. Take as an illustration any social convivial gathering of young Australians, and it will be found that while good songs, with excellent music admirably rendered, will be received with decorous applause, yet, when some youngster, with the assurance that comes of being recognized as a *comique*, without any special vocal talent, introduces a few verses of a topical song, with a jingling refrain, his reception is tumultuous, and he becomes promptly the hero of the evening. This



underlying craving for the stimulant of rollicking laughter has, during the last generation, entirely altered the character, and, to some extent, destroyed the object, of the one-time popular public readings. Wordsworth and Tennyson, Whittier and Longfellow, who once formed the staple of this kind of entertainment, are voted namby-pamby, and have given place to G. R. Sims, to Bret Harte, and to Colonel John Hay.

Humour is the salt of life, and no doubt a generation of young people who never got beyond Milton's Sonnets or Wordsworth's 'Excursion,' would be a generation of prigs. But there should be a *via media*, wherein it would be possible to give free play to the higher emotions of the mind, without having our aspirations turned into ridicule. Of New Zealand it may be said, that while it is justly described as the tourist's paradise, the inspiration which might be expected from its majestic mountain panoramas, its picturesque lakes and forests, and the traditions of its brave and interesting aborigines, has not descended very generally on its colonists. Though something like a score of aspirants date their productions from Maoriland, only two of them have made a reputation beyond the limits of the Colony—ALFRED DOMETT and Thomas Bracken.

Domett was an Englishman, educated at Cambridge, and a member of the Bar. He was thirty years of age when he arrived in New Zealand, and had already published more than one volume of poems, chiefly relating to his experiences in America, where he had resided for two or three years. He proved himself



J. BRUNTON STEPHENS.

[To face page 54.]

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eminently fitted for colonial life, occupying many important positions, and rising to be Premier of the Colony in 1862. In youth he had been the intimate friend of Robert Browning, who gave his poetical aspirations much encouragement. In his chief work, 'Ranolf and Amohia,' which he calls a South Sea day-dream, there are modes of thought and turns of expression that indicate the master's influence, and that also reproduce his occasional obscurity. It is claimed for Domett that no one has equalled him in his vivid descriptions of the wonderful scenery of the hot lakes districts in the Northern Island; and that he has gathered into this poem all that is most picturesque about a fast-vanishing race, whose legends he desired to rescue from oblivion. Granted that he is a true poet, it must be admitted that he is sadly deficient in the sense of proportion. Those who would read for the story are exasperated by the amount of philosophical speculation which hinders its flow; and notwithstanding a liberal variation of metre it is impossible to escape the sense of monotony. Hence he is not the poet of the people, who, indeed, in these latter days of stress, are somewhat shy of entertaining the epic as a form of recreation. And this particular epic, which is said to be longer than Milton's 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained' combined, scintillates here and there with brilliant imagery and vivid descriptive touches, and anon trails off into tedious discursiveness and uninteresting elegance.

THOMAS BRACKEN, who passed most of his youthful days in Victoria, has attained a wide popularity

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in the land of his adoption, where he has made his mark as a journalist, newspaper proprietor, and politician. The 'Lays of the Land of the Maori and the Moa' was published in London as far back as 1884, but some years later he gathered that and several additional pieces into a very handsomely printed and illustrated volume called 'Musings in Maoriland' (Dunedin and Sydney, 1890). It contains an introductory historical sketch, by the Hon. Robert Stout, and a highly commendatory preface by Sir George Grey. No poet could desire a more flattering introduction to his readers, but it does not appear to have created the demand. Many of his pieces are based on aboriginal legends, or wars, and here he comes into comparison with Domett, and shows less of force. His best work is certainly done in the lyrical form, though an apparent facility of diction seduces him into heroic narrative, ballad, sonnet, or blank verse, with equal unconcern. There are a number of pieces in celebration of events of public or local interest, which, like all verses written to order, certainly lack the "divine afflatus," though they bear evidence of the extent to which his services are in demand, and the readiness of his response. A poem called 'A Christmas Reverie' is rich in imagery, perfect in diction, and expresses the most touchingly profound religious feeling. 'Not Understood' is a beautiful little lyric that ought to be widely known. It really deserves to stand beside Burns' 'Address to the Unco Guid.'

In Queensland we find, in the person of MR. J. BRUNTON STEPHENS, the man whom the local public

hail as the chief singer of the Southern Seas. In Brisbane it would be flat blasphemy to rank him after Gordon, whose impetuous dash, and strong if careless form he does not seek to emulate; or to put him on the same plane with Kendall, whose melodious melancholy and plaintive sweetness are equally foreign to the methods of the Queensland poet.

Brunton Stephens, though a native of Scotland, has been intimately identified with the intellectual life of Queensland for over thirty years. Educated at the Edinburgh University, he passed his early years in the scholastic profession in the neighbourhood of Glasgow; but he enjoyed exceptional opportunities of broadening his mind and expanding his sympathies by foreign travel, having visited Southern Europe, Egypt, and Palestine, at the most impressionable age. To a keen perception of natural beauties, and a happy facility in transferring them to language, he adds a power of introspection and analysis of human thought and feeling which stamps him as a true poet. Five years after his arrival in Australia he published the first edition of 'Convict Once' (London, Macmillan, 1871), written while gaining his early colonial experience as a tutor in the family of a Queensland squatter. The story upon which this poem is based is a painful one, unrelieved even by the ultimate happiness of any of the characters, and moreover it is told in a trying metre, which appears to offer the greatest resistance to the English tongue. It is not surprising, therefore, that even with the generous criticism it received from competent English reviewers, it did not command

any marked success in the book market. And yet there is very little room for doubt that, from a literary point of view, it is the most highly finished piece of work that has been accomplished in Australia. Its unfamiliar hexameter dress makes its ready appreciation somewhat difficult to any but the genuine student of poetry, and it is not until it has been read through at least a second time, that its great power and gifted insight, its glowing imagination, and cultured dignity of language make themselves felt. In a hundred pages there is scarcely a line that could be improved, and the delicate phases of the story are worked out in

“Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.”

The fault that might be laid at its door by an exacting critic is that it possibly suffers from too much condensation. It presupposes a knowledge on the part of the reader, which is certainly not attained by a single perusal; hence as a story it seems to want explanatory marginal notes. But, when the poem has been studied appreciatively, the imagination, fired by the highly-wrought picture, fills in for itself the missing episodes. There are several other poems in the volume of his collected works (Melbourne, George Robertson, 1885) that fully maintain his high reputation. The lofty thought and delicate imagery of ‘The Dark Companion’; the tender sympathetic pathos of ‘The Angel of the Doves’; and the Miltonic grandeur of ‘Mute Discourse,’ have an inspiration in them which bespeaks the temperament that, in the language of old, is born, not made. But, for one

that can appreciate the power of his more ambitious efforts, there are hundreds who are delighted with the hilarious humour of the 'Ode to a Black Gin,' the droll story of 'The Chineese Cook,' or the witty sarcasm of 'Drought and Doctrine.' Clever as are these triflings with the Muse, and a score of other vivid little pictures of Australian life, it must be remembered, in extenuation of their prominence, that they bring more than popularity,—they bring coin to the exchequer which blank verse does not. The verses which have chiefly made his popularity need no commendation here; they sparkle with a wholesome humour, and they are too widely quoted to need any illustrations.

The contributions of Tasmania and South Australia to the Muses are to be found in some thirty small volumes, mostly of an ephemeral character, none of them laying claim to any special local colouring. 'Lyra Australis,' by CAROLINE LEAKEY, was published in Hobart as far back as 1854, and is chiefly interesting on account of its comparative antiquity. It has all the marks of being the work of an invalid, and its graceful and melodious verse is deeply tinged with melancholy, and inspired by a strong but rather narrow religious sentiment. MRS. MEREDITH, who has charmed all naturalists by her books on the floral treasures of Tasmania, published in Hobart, in 1878, 'Grandmama's Verse-book for Young Australia'; but, while possibly very gratifying to the young folks to whom they were addressed, they are not calculated to enhance her reputation as an authoress.

DEAN RUSSELL of Adelaide has published two



volumes, 'The Seeker, and other Poems' (Adelaide, 1881), and 'Voices of Doubt' (Adelaide, 1884). His verses have the easy flow of a cultured writer, but they do not stir the pulses. The longest poem, 'The Seeker,' which runs into a hundred pages, is a theological discussion between the author and a free-thinking seeker after truth, which, to the uninitiated in such matters, appears to end in a drawn game. A controversy on such a wide-spreading subject, conducted in blank verse, does not appear to lend itself to close argument and incisive logic. Most of the other poems are of a religious character, and include many hymns and paraphrases of the Church of England services.

The difficulty of selection becomes intensified in dealing with the large number of volumes of verse that have been issued in Victoria. If some really deserving writer is passed over, unnoticed, the solace that he or she can derive from the fact, is the belief that not want of appreciation but want of space compels the slight.

Taking, as is most fit, the ladies first, it may be said that though the poetesses of Australia have generally shown a preference for popular journals and magazines as a means of publication, there have been a few volumes issued independently during the last decade. Two of these may be easily singled out as entitled to prominence: 'Poems' by JENNINGS CARMICHAEL, published simultaneously in London and Melbourne in 1895, and 'Unspoken Thoughts,' by MRS. CROSS, who, under her maiden name, Ada Cambridge, has given us such excellent specimens of Australian fiction.

Miss Carmichael (now Mrs. Francis Mullis) has written some delightful bush idylls, brightly reminiscent of her early days on the outskirts of settlement, but she is chiefly known and admired for her exquisite lyrics devoted to child life, the outcome of her laudable services in the Sick Children's Hospital. She handles this theme as few have done before her, with a loving tenderness that captures the reader's sympathy, as in 'Little Jim,' 'For some one's sake,' and kindred pieces. And all her affection does not go out to little children. There are poems in the book dealing with love that reach a very high level. As specimens of this quality, 'A Woman's Mood' and 'A Remonstrance' are both strong in restrained passion. Brunton Stephens has called Miss Carmichael the Australian Jean Ingelow, but though some of the pieces may bear traces of that admirable model, there are more evidences of the influence of Tennyson, and her lines on a 'Dead Laureate' are amongst the finest of the many In Memoriam tributes to that king of song. A large proportion of the poems have been published from time to time in the *Australasian* and other journals, and their collection into a handsomely printed volume is a distinct gain to our local literature.

'Unspoken Thoughts,' by MRS. CROSS (London, 1887), is not at all as well known as it deserves to be. Probably this is due to the fact that it was published anonymously, and has nothing in subject or treatment to indicate an Australian origin. However excellent its quality, the chances of success of a

small volume of verse, by an unknown author, in competition with the teeming products of the London press are very remote; and under any circumstances, merit that is not vigorously advertised by log-rolling friends takes a long time to secure its reward. The whole tone of this book bears the impress of having been written for love, and not for gain or fame. In the language of Bailey's 'Festus,' they are the utterances of one "who feels great truths, and tells them." Hence doubtless it was not pushed, in the commercial sense, but, at any rate, the first small issue is out of print, and it is anticipated that a revised and possibly enlarged edition may be issued before long. Of its class it is poetry of most perfect form, but it is exclusively introspective, and its prevailing character is sadness. There is no poem in the book of the purely descriptive order,—no communing with external nature,—but the aspirations of the human heart, the yearnings of the troubled spirit are portrayed with a melodious and passionate directness that clings about one like a personal supplication. Admirable in rhythm, intense in expression, lofty in thought, and musical in a minor key in construction, it is yet remarkable that several of the poems are denunciatory of many of the conventional ideas of society. The manifest sense of strong conviction, and the solemn earnestness of tone, save them from being classed with what has been called the 'Literature of Revolt.'

The justification for this attitude, and the keynote of the poems is found in a sonnet, 'Honour':

"Me let the world disparage and despise—  
     This virtuous world that loves its gilded chains,  
     Its mean successes and its sordid gains,  
 Its pleasant vice and profitable lies ;  
 Let its strong hand my rebel deeds chastise,  
     The rebel blood that surges in my veins,  
     And deal me all due penalties and pains,  
 And make me hideous in my neighbours' eyes.  
 But let me fall not in mine own esteem,  
     My poor deceit or selfish greed debased.  
     Let me be clean from secret stain and shame,  
 Know myself true, though only false I seem—  
     Know myself worthy, howsoe'er disgraced—  
     Know myself right, though all the world should  
         blame."

It is extremely difficult to select a specimen of the poetry of Mrs. Cross that will do justice to its intensity, as well as to its unaffected simplicity. The following verses taken from a poem called 'The Shallow,' in which a husband, oppressed by the vision of an impending early grave, wrestles with the problem that all must solve, and finds small joy in the compensations of a shadowy hereafter, should give the reader a desire for the perusal of the whole poem :

"Whence did we come ? And is it there we go ?  
     We look behind,—night hides our place of birth ;  
     The blank before hides heaven, for aught we know.  
     But what is heaven to us, whose home is earth ?  
 Flesh may be gross—the husk that holds the seed—  
 And gold and gems worth more than common bread ;  
 But flesh is *us*, and bread is what we need,  
 And, changed and glorious, we should still be dead.  
     What is the infinite universe to him  
     Who has no home ? Eternal Future seems  
     Like the Eternal Past, unreal and dim—  
     The airy region of a poet's dreams.

What spirit essence, howsoe'er divine,  
 Can our lost selves restore from dusty grave?  
 Thy mortal mind and body—thine and mine—  
 Make all the joys I know, and all I crave.  
     No fair romance of transcendental bliss,  
     No tale of palms and crowns my dull heart stirs,  
     That only hungers for a woman's kiss,  
     And asks no life that is not one with hers.  
 Not such hereafter can I wish to see;  
 Not this pale hope my sinking soul exalts;  
 I want no sexless angel—only thee,  
 My human love, with all thy human faults.  
     Just as thou art—not beautiful or wise,  
     But prone to simple sins, and sad unrest;  
     With thy warm lips and arms, and thy sweet eyes,—  
     Sweeter for tears they weep upon my breast.  
 Just as thou art—with thy soft household ways,  
 Thy noble failures and thy poor success,—  
 Thy love that fits me for my strenuous days—  
 A mortal woman—neither more nor less.  
     And thou must pass with these too rapid hours  
     To that great deep from whence we both were brought;  
     Thy sentient flesh must turn to grass and flowers,  
     To birds and beasts, to dust—to air—to naught.”

\* \* \* \* \*

MR. GEORGE GORDON McCRAE, though born in Scotland, was but seven years old when he arrived in Port Phillip in 1841, when that district was an outlying dependency of New South Wales. He spent his early years on his father's station, the homestead of which was on the picturesque slopes of Arthur's Seat, near where now stands the little village of Dromana. Here, at the hands of a private tutor, coupled with the supervision of an exceptionally accomplished mother, he received his education, and after a brief experience of commercial life in

Melbourne, he was transferred to the Civil Service, wherein he served her Majesty for more than forty years. This long interval was broken by a year's furlough in 1864, when he visited Europe, and again in 1887, when he spent a delightful holiday in exploring the tropical beauties of the Seychelles Archipelago, and in visiting Mauritius and Bourbon. Mr. McCrae inherited from his mother the poetical temperament, and the cultured appreciation of all that is excellent in literature and art, which made her, without doubt, the most notable woman in Melbourne society in the placid years preceding the gold discoveries.

The Civil Service of Victoria does not offer to men of capacity the same field for the advancement of their own interests as may be found in the more stirring domain of commerce; but to the man who has resources in himself, which cannot be valued in pounds sterling, it is an ideal life, free from the anxieties of trade, and until recently it was assured of a leisured pensioned ending. The daily, and probably monotonous routine of office work, was compensated for by evenings void of care, in which McCrae could give himself unreservedly to the work he loved; and, though he has not published much in book form, he has contributed scores of short poems to most of the best periodicals published in Melbourne and Sydney during the last generation. It is thirty years since 'The Story of Balladiadro' (Melbourne, Dwight, 1867) was issued. It was the first worthy attempt to vitalize the legends of the Australian aborigines, and was built largely upon

the author's personal experience of a well-nigh vanished race, whose customs and language he has carefully studied. Doubtless, while adhering closely to the tribal traditions, he has endowed the actors with certain heroic attributes, mainly evolved from his own poetic temperament; but he had good precedent for this in the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' and the other poems in which Sir Walter Scott, by the magic of his verse, clothes the rude Border robbers with the mantle of chivalry. Later in the same year McCrae published a second story, 'Mamba the Bright-Eyed,' which, while less concerned with those deeds of battle, murder, and sudden death that make up so much of the history of savage tribes, shows an advance in the picturesqueness of the descriptive touches, and a great mastery of rhythmic flow and cadence. In 'Balladiadro' there is more action and power; in 'Mamba' more of sweetness and polish. These poems are long out of print, and it would be a desirable addition to our literature to have them re-issued in one volume, with an added selection from those poems which McCrae has so prodigally scattered over our periodicals. For they are essentially Australian in their subject and treatment; and in the interest of their story, and the rhythmic flow of the verse, are probably superior to anything that has been written on the same subject, not even excepting Alfred Domett's great epic.

Mr. McCrae describes 'Mamba' flowingly thus:

"A story of the mount and plain,  
The lake, the river, and the sea;

A voice that wakes to life again  
An age-long slumbering melody :  
A dream of winds and rustling trees,  
Of whispering reeds, of sighing sedge,  
Of woods that woo the fickle breeze,  
Or wave the grass from topmost ledge  
Of foreland stretching o'er the deep,  
Where, crowned with snowy sparkling foam,  
The blue wave thunders 'gainst the steep,  
And stars with spray the purple dome.  
A memory, in a narrow span,  
Of days long dead—too bright to last ;  
A shadow of primeval man,  
A footfall echo of the past."

'The Man in the Iron Mask' (Melbourne, George Robertson, 1873) is the only other volume of poetry bearing Mr. McCrae's name. It has had a quarter of a century in which to achieve popularity, and has not yet secured it. The reason is not far to seek. In Australia, at least, the much-debated personality of the Man in the Iron Mask is as "caviare to the general" as is the authorship of the letters of Junius. It is one of those subjects that in leisured literary circles has evoked an immense amount of dilettante criticism, but no personal interest. The prolonged sufferings of the unhappy prisoner are as shadowy as his own identity, and though they are told in graceful blank verse, they fail to elicit the keen sympathetic response that is stirred on behalf of Byron's Prisoner of Chillon. Indeed if Byron had spread his story over a hundred and fifty pages, it is doubtful if even he could have sustained the reader's interest. For life in a dungeon, or even in a respectable fortress, becomes monotonous to



more than the prisoner. Mr. McCrae is not insensible of that fact, and in his preface he says that to avoid it he has "sought to diversify it, as far as prudent, with songs, episodes, readings, and short poems, investing my hero, to this end, alternately with the character of reader, listener, reciter, and musician." And in this he has done wisely, for some of the interpolated pieces, both lyrical, such as 'Poesy' and 'The Poets,' and descriptive, such as 'Morning at Sea in the Tropics,' are of a really high order of composition. Indeed the fact that H. W. Longfellow selected the latter poem as a fine example of the poetry of Oceana, is a distinction that may excuse the author being indifferent to the opinion of local critics. It is not easy to dis sever from their context fragments that in quotation would do justice to this poetical romance; but there are, scattered through its pages, many passages of great beauty, both in thought and in expression. The opening of the fourth book, describing a storm spending its fury on the Bastille, is a superb piece of word-painting, conceived in a genuine poetical spirit.

The longest of McCrae's minor poems, 'A Rosebud from the Garden of the Taj,' was published in the *Melbourne Review* in 1883, and was much admired for its musical diction and graceful oriental imagery. But the number of his scattered verses is legion.

MR. CHARLES ALLAN SHERRARD, author of 'A Daughter of the South, and other Poems' (London and Sydney, 1889), is a solicitor in a country town in Victoria, whose romantic ideals and poetical aspira-

tions have not been crushed out of him by the pursuit of a profession in which a free play of the imagination would seem to be a drawback. His little volume differs in one respect from most of his local compeers, in that the narrative form predominates, and Mr. Sherrard has a specially bright, crisp flow in this form, which, apart from the pleasing diction, always secures the reader's interest. The one exception is the first poem, 'At Last: a Squatter's Story,' which, besides being rather unpleasant in subject, leaves too many gaps for the imagination to fill in, and is, moreover, essentially unreal. The incident of the false letter, concocted by a rival, announcing the faithlessness of the plighted one, though a very common stage property, bespeaks such imbecility on the part of the credulous receiver, as to put him outside the range of our sympathy. In a few short pages of verse, where details are impracticable, the fatuousness of the hero, and his ready resource for his grief in dissipation, becomes irritating.

'A Daughter of the South' is an admirable character portrait, drawn in vivid colour, and full of highly artistic touches. So, in a totally different form, is 'Satan's Ganymede,' a scene that is being acted in a score of bush shanties all the year round. Despite some few slips in the use of unallowable rhymes, 'The Rivals' is one of the best poems in the book. It has a conversational flow of narrative, a cheerful philosophy, and a genuine highly poetic ending. The lines written on the picture by Herbert Schmalz, 'Too Late,' are in every respect worthy of

that painted poem, and deal with a tender theme with passionate strength. One of the few humorous pieces in the volume, 'Bruce's Grand National,' is devoted to the inevitable horse-race, without which no recent Australian poet seems to consider his repertoire complete. But this is not the line in which Mr. Sherrard will make his mark. His work justifies the public in taking him seriously.

There are manifest reasons why MR. ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND'S 'Thirty Short Poems' (Melbourne, Melville and Co., 1890) should not be dealt with at length here. It is perhaps sufficient to say that, in comparison with his local contemporaries, he shows generally more maturity of thought, and having a gift of lucidity in expression, he is enabled to sustain the reader's interest throughout, whether his theme is philosophic, pictorial, or emotional. 'The Birth of Nature' is full of brilliantly-descriptive and suggestive passages; and a blank verse poem, 'Love and the Law,' is entitled to take rank beside 'Enoch Arden' in the realistic simplicity of its expression and the intensity of its pathos. Of the book as a whole it may be said, that the sentiments expressed are elevating, the phrasing melodious, and the tone profoundly sympathetic.

MR. E. B. LOUGHRAN, like Mr. McCrae, is a Scotchman by birth, and after a brief probation in Australian journalism, he gravitated into the Civil Service of Victoria, where he still flourishes. His volume of poems, 'Neath Austral Skies' (Melbourne, Melville and Co., 1894), is a collection of fugitive pieces, several of which were originally published

in the *Australasian* and other papers. They are of very unequal merit, and are presented in a great variety of metres, all strictly correct, and rather irritatingly proper, in the conventional sense. It cannot be said that they display much originality of thought or of expression; and in only a very few is there any indication of enthusiasm. The highest flight in the book is reached in 'The Dawn of the Dominion,' which, though unduly drawn out, and weakened by some local allusions, contains some noble aspirations, voiced in befitting language. The first, third, fourth, and last cantos are real gems in the literature of Federation. Some of the lyrical verses are very sweet in expression, but too often they seem but a reflex of what previous gleaners in the same field have made their own. Thus 'Dead Leaves,' a pretty conceit, most faultlessly dressed, seems like an echo of Tom Moore; and one almost expects to find the name of Longfellow appended to 'The Dreamer,' so close is the imitation of his style.

In those pieces relating to such exclusively Australian subjects as 'John Batman's Village,' or the 'Story of Burke and Wills,' Mr. Loughran certainly does not rise to the occasion. Strange to say, the story of Batman's landing in Victoria, prosaic and commonplace as were all its surroundings, is treated much more poetically than the nobler theme of the perished heroes of exploration. Their splendid share in the deeds that won Australia gains neither honour nor interest from the laboured verses in which it is here recorded. Many of the

poems are written in honour of special occasions,—Federation gatherings, exhibition openings, and so forth,—and are at least quite equal to the average of that class of poetry to order, which looms so largely in Mr. Thomas Bracken's volume. But Mr. Loughran is at his best in his short lyrical pieces, and many of them are admirably adapted for a musical setting. One poem, not in the lyric form, called 'Musa,' is perhaps the most original in the volume, and makes a charming picture, without a blemish—a combination of sweetness and resonance rarely met with. The reader ought not to overlook the very poetically conceived and gracefully executed dedication to the author's wife.

MR. JOHN BERNARD O'HARA is a young school-master born in Australia, and a graduate of the Melbourne University. He has published two volumes, 'Songs of the South' (London and Melbourne, 1891), and a second series under the same title (London, 1895). While there is a great similarity of style and quality in the average work of Sherrard, Loughran, and O'Hara, the latter is the more melodious in his utterances, though he cannot compare with Sherrard in the narrative form, nor with Loughran at his best in the quality of thought. Like most young poets, O'Hara, when singing the beauties of nature, is frequently unable to resist the temptation to introduce classical imagery; while in some of his pieces, notably in 'Cudgewa Creek' and 'Snowy Creek,' he risks his claims to originality by following too closely on Kendall's footsteps. Again, his 'Ode to Romance' must have been inspired by an intimate

acquaintance with the methods of Edgar Allan Poe. But when he trusts to himself his confidence is justified—as in the musical flow and picturesque setting of 'The Days of Sweet October'; the Tennysonian suggestiveness of 'The Death of the Old Year'; or the pathetic beauty in which the reminiscence of 'A Christmas Tryst' is enshrined. Nearly one hundred pages—fully half of the second series volume—are filled with a narrative called 'The Wild White Man,' purporting to give the adventures of William Buckley, the convict who escaped from the abortive settlement at Sorrento in 1803. He is personified under the name of Loman, and he drags out a monotonous career of thirty years, diversified by morbid reflections and occasional songs, to say nothing of the highest-toned love-passages, quite incompatible with the known character of this unlettered semi-barbarian. The *dénouement*, which represents Loman as escaping from the enraged savages, who believe that he is betraying them, by being taken on board a passing vessel, is quite at variance with the real facts of Buckley's return to civilization, as also are all the incidents connected with his efforts to make himself known to his countrymen. It is no discredit to Mr. O'Hara to say, that he has failed to invest with the glamour of romance this very commonplace hero and his mean, repulsive surroundings. It might have been possible to have sustained the interest through a dozen or possibly twenty pages, but in the long vistas of the aimless years of wandering, there is such want of action, that probably but few readers

will "endure unto the end." And this is to be regretted, for there are some bright passages in the story, though it never reaches to the musical rhythm and vivid action of Mr. McCrae's aboriginal legends. A vigorous pruning, in a future edition, might make it more worthy of the reputation which the author has honestly won in other forms of verse.

'A Little Tin Plate, and other Verses' (Melbourne, George Robertson, 1881) is the only attempt to collect the scattered verses of GARNET WALCH into a volume, but his productive energy has found an outlet in most of the magazines and literary journals of the last twenty years. The originality of his ideas, the vividly dramatic character of his descriptive touches, the swing of his metre, and the happy eccentricity of many of his rhymes, convey the impression of the most easy spontaneity in all he writes. The humour, which is his forte, is healthy and natural, and he can on occasion touch a chord of pathos that stirs a quick response. Few can have read the memorial lines on his friend Marcus Clarke without realizing this.

The last name to be chronicled in this selection is that of the latest comer, WIDLIAM GAY, who published two small collections of sonnets in 1896. From the lines in the sonnet addressed to J. Brunton Stephens,

"'Tis not sole tie that I have dared to be  
A lowly craftsman of the minstrel page,  
For in thy ear and mine is still the rage  
Of storms that scourge the Caledonian sea,"

the nationality of Mr. Gay is easily inferred; and it is well known that he came to Australia in the hope

that its more genial climate might check the ravages of a malady that threatened his life. He has been amongst us for some twelve years, and if he has not won health, he has—however poor a recompense it may be for that priceless blessing—certainly deserved fame, for the lofty tone and concentrated power of thought he has displayed in this small collection of sonnets.

It is a form of poetical composition that appeals more to the student than to the general reader, and yet it has been the vehicle of some of the richest thought in our language. Apart from his plays, it was Shakespeare's chiefest form of expression; Milton reached sublimer heights in some of his sonnets than in his grand epic; Wordsworth's most enduring verse is formed on these lines; and the most perfect work of Elizabeth Barrett Browning takes the same form. The structural conditions require an ear attuned to perfect harmony, the limitations of space necessitate condensed thought, and the perfectness of the finished picture implies genius. Perhaps it is a laudable desire to surmount all these obstacles that has induced so many of our young Australian aspirants to try their "'prentice hand" in this direction. As a rule they have not succeeded, for a sonnet can hardly be written upon the strength of the bare resolve to do it. To be of any lasting value it must be the outcome of that ecstatic condition indicated by Wordsworth:—

"I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; . . . . .



A motion and a spirit that impels  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
 And rolls through all things."

Now as a rule the sonnets of Mr. Gay conform to most of the recognized requirements. All of them exhibit finished skill in structure, and are exceptionally lucid in expression; many of them express profound philosophic thought in graceful language. Take as a sample the one on 'Australian Federation,' as voicing a lofty national aim:

"From all division let our land be free,  
 For God has made her one: complete she lies  
 Within the unbroken circle of the skies,  
 And round her, indivisible, the sea  
 Breaks on her single shore; while only we,  
 Her foster-children, bound with sacred ties  
 Of one dear blood, one storied enterprise,  
 Are negligent of her integrity. —  
 Her seamless garment, at great Mammon's nod,  
 With hands unfilial we have basely rent,  
 With petty variance our souls are spent,  
 And ancient kinship underfoot is trod:  
 O let us rise, united, penitent,  
 And be one people—mighty, serving God!"

Possibly it is a misprint in the book, but euphony requires that the word "variance" should be in the plural.

Of the others it may be said that 'The Quest Divine' is the most impressively solemn; 'Success' the most dramatically picturesque; and the one inscribed to 'A. S.' a perfect gem in the happiness of its imagery.

The blank verse poem, 'Christ on Olympus,' is an ambitious attempt to describe an indescribable scene.

There is no fault to be found with the language, which is bold and dignified, and the description of the tumult of dissent with which the inferior gods receive the proposals of the Christ is graphically dramatic. The weakness of the conception is in assuming the promptly spontaneous conversion of the entire Pantheon as the result of a single speech, which, from the proselytizing point of view, is more dogmatic than conciliatory. But possibly a miracle was intended, in which case criticism is dumb.

Lest any literary purist, reminiscent of the inspired utterances of those kings of song who have crowned English literature with the glory of their genius, should say, surely these colonial aspirants for the bays are too universally commended, it may be urged in extenuation that they are all selected examples. It would have been an easier task, and perhaps more amusing reading, to have taken an equal, or even a much larger number from the bulk, and dealt with them in the scathing manner of the earlier Saturday Reviewers. But it would have been as unfair to our local singers, and as calumnious of colonial intelligence, as even Mr. Francis Adams could desire. Taking into account our age, or rather our youth, our engrossing surroundings, our limited leisure, and the many factors that keep Australian society from crystallizing, we may be proud that something has been done—not much, perhaps, but something—to keep alive in our busy community the traditions which we brought with us from the land of Shakespeare and Milton, of Wordsworth and Tennyson.

## CHAPTER III

### FICTION

EXCLUDING the numerous Australian stories which have been published in England by writers as yet unknown to fame, many of which may have been written in the Colonies, and leaving out of count the hundreds of stories that began and ended their career in the local magazines and weekly journals, a list of something over two hundred books and booklets devoted to Australian fiction may be catalogued. Some of these, published in Sydney, date back to the Forties, and acquired a certain local popularity, though their authors are long since forgotten. Bushrangers and convicts—the former generally an apotheosis of the latter—figured largely in the *dramatis personæ*, and, roughly judged by a few samples, literary style was subordinated to stirring action and sensationalism. With the arrival of the gold-digger, a new and attractive figure was pressed into the ranks to serve for the ideal hero.

More than forty years ago, the late Mr. Frederic Sinnett published two articles in the *Journal of Australasia* (Melbourne, Nov. 1856) on 'The Fiction Fields of Australia,' in which he cleverly pointed out the unoccupied domain awaiting the vivifying touch

of the man of genius, to people it with the creatures of his imagination, whose successes and failures, joys and sorrows, should alternately delight and depress us. But he had to admit that the man of genius was not in evidence at the time he wrote, and further, that the breed was rare, and required certain conditions of environment for their full fruition, which we did not possess. To point his moral, he took a brief survey of what had been done up to that time in working the field. The result will appear curious to readers of to-day, for he says: "Decidedly the best Australian novel is 'Clara Morison,' the work of a young lady who for many years has resided in South Australia, in which colony the story is laid. Considered entirely apart from its Australian scenery and colouring, 'Clara Morison' would be a book deserving careful criticism and much praise. . . . It is not a work of mere description, but a work of art," etc. etc. Few people in this generation have ever heard of the novel, but it is noteworthy that the lady who wrote it still continues to enlighten the Australian public through the medium of the press, and on subjects much weightier than fiction. The writings and lectures of Miss C. H. Spence of Adelaide on political subjects have made her a reputation in both England and America with thousands who never heard of her in the field of fiction, though she published at least four novels in orthodox three volume form, of which 'Clara Morison' was the first.

To this early period belong 'Rowcroft's Tales of the Colonies,' and kindred collections, which were

once much in vogue, in default of something more artistic. The tentative character of much of this early fiction is shown by the fact, that of the large number of volumes published, fully 90 per cent. of them were single efforts, presumably, in most cases, not repeated, for the very convincing reason of want of success. It is only fair to say, that though a large proportion were feeble in conception and destitute of any literary merit, yet some deserved success, and were quite equal to the average of the fiction in demand at the circulating libraries in Great Britain. Many of those stories that had a claim to live fell on stony ground, and failed to take root. They appealed to a limited population, largely composed of immigrants, who not only cherished the traditions of their home reading, but who were supplied promptly with the newest books of the authors they had learned to appreciate at a less cost than those of the local scribe, whom they had to take on trust. Until late in the Fifties there were no circulating libraries worthy of the name in Australian cities, and the few private citizens who formed collections wanted some assurance of value for the money they spent in books.

To-day all this is changed, and a score of Australian "Mudies," of book clubs, and book exchanges, enable our citizens with a taste for reading to wander at will through every path of literature, at a mere nominal cost, and in several public institutions at no cost at all.

Hence the Australian writer of fiction is now fairly certain of an audience, and if he or she fails to charm that audience into asking for more, then

surely the fault must lie in the quality of the product, and should not be imputed to the would-be consumer. Although the issue of a large number of works of fiction does not necessarily indicate that the author has either acquired or deserved fame, yet it is a fact that no writer has made an enduring reputation on one novel. The greatest novelists of the Old World, men of the calibre of Scott and Dickens, have been notable for the fertility of their production. If, therefore, account is only taken of those Australian writers who have each published several novels during the last twenty years or so, the survey of Australian fiction may be reduced within fairly reasonable limits.

MR. THOMAS ALEXANDER BROWNE, better known under his *nom de plume* of 'Rolf Boldrewood,' stands in the front rank of the workers in the fiction fields of Australia. He has been more productive, and far more exclusively Australian in the selection of his subjects and the development of his characters, than any of his male competitors. Though not an Australian by birth, Mr. Browne was only an infant when he landed in Sydney in 1830, and he has had more than half-a-century's experience in the varied phases of colonial life, covering the most momentous and exciting period in the development of his adopted country. The changes that he has seen, and has borne his share in effecting, may be gleaned from a perusal of his pleasant gossip little book, 'Old Melbourne Memories' (George Robertson, Melbourne, 1884), wherein will be found faithful word-pictures of life in Victoria in 1840 onwards.

While yet in his teens, Mr. Browne formed a cattle station in the far west of Victoria, then an almost unexplored wilderness, where the aborigines were not only numerous but full of fight. After passing successfully through all the pioneering stages of the squatting life, and reaping a fair reward for his toils, he was tempted by the larger areas and more liberal pastoral laws of New South Wales, to take up a station in Riverina. Here, after a year or two of fair promise, he was visited by one of those terribly prolonged periodical droughts which are the scourge of the country, and which overwhelmed him and scores of other good men in financial disaster. In 'The Squatter's Dream' (Macmillan, London, 1890), a realistic picture is given of the painful surroundings of the grim struggle in which the squatter is so often involved with the relentless forces of nature. The story is told with an earnestness of feeling and fidelity of detail that could only have come of personal experience, and that experience intensified by suffering. It may be in part autobiographical, but whether it is so or not, there is no doubt that in this story, and in 'A Colonial Reformer' (Macmillan, London, 1890), we have, apart altogether from the interest of the narrative, the most faithful picture of squatting life to be found anywhere in fiction. Even the delightful story of 'Geoffrey Hamlyn,' notwithstanding Kingsley's more finished literary style, has to yield to Rolf Boldrewood on these points.

When Mr. Browne abandoned squatting in 1870, he was appointed a Police Magistrate and Gold-

fields Warden in New South Wales, and entered upon a new phase of experience, which, with his keen observation and quick perception of character, must have been a very mine of material for novel writing. He had long been a contributor to the serials and journals at Sydney and Melbourne without attracting that attention which his writing deserved. But the publication of 'Robbery under Arms' in London, in 1888, brought home to him the truth of the scriptural saying, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country." For the success of the book in England was both prompt and substantial, and it received strongly appreciative notices from most of the critical journals. When it was re-issued for the Colonies in Macmillan's Library, with the imprimatur of English approval, thousands read it in Australia who had never heard of its tentative publication in the *Sydney Mail* years before. It may be said in excuse of this neglect, that even an intelligent and interested reader cannot form any very definite idea of the merits of a book that is doled out to him in weekly instalments over a whole year. In the busy life of the ordinary citizen, a chapter here and there gets dropped out, and the interdependency of the characters and incidents gets sadly blurred. Hence the British critics were the first to fully recognize its merits, because they, and the public whom they advised, were the first to see it under suitable conditions.

'Robbery under Arms' is a vividly written story of stirring adventure, with no complicated plot to unravel, and no moral, sexual, or social problems to



discuss. Indeed, it will probably be regarded by some as wanting in the creative faculty of imagination, so strictly does it seem to adhere to the records of incidents which are all fairly within the bounds of probability. Doubtless some of the most exciting incidents are, in effect, real history and not fiction at all, though the names of the actors, the motives for action, and even the result of that action, may have been quite different from that into which the novelist's art has shaped them. The result is a story that from the first chapter awakens interest, which grows into sympathy, and that maintains those qualities in tension to the last. The autobiographical form in which the story is cast is one that imposes severe limitations; but the personality of the writer is cleverly and consistently maintained throughout, though he has a tendency to get rather more refined in his ideas as he approaches the end. But his story is told with a fine manly ring in it; where there is pathos, it is genuine, both in act and expression. The character of the narrator is so thoroughly well defined, that one recognizes at a glance the impossibility of any feeble sentimentality in his words or deeds. The strongest work that Mr. Browne has done in the portrayal of character is in this book. The Marston family and the aboriginal Warrigal are picturesque types that could be found in no other country; but the daughter, Aileen Marston, is, both in conception and development, an original creation of which the author may be justifiably proud. The bushranger hero, 'Starlight,' is the vehicle for displaying the combined

characteristics of the half-dozen outlaws who have made for themselves a reputation with Australian youth, before which Dick Turpin and Claude Duval must stand humbled and abashed. And yet, unlike his English prototypes, whatever 'Starlight' says or does is as believable as the simple truthfulness of Robinson Crusoe. All that Mr. Browne does to present him acceptably to the reader, is to make him more polished in manner than Gardiner or Power, and less sanguinary than Mike Howe or Morgan. But his ways were not the ways of pleasantness, and he gets to the recognized end of the evil-doer all the same as if he had been the most bloodthirsty of his tribe. It may be said, that the prominence given to this type of character has an injurious reaction on the community; but the function of the novelist is—or rather, before the era of the novel with a purpose, was—to entertain, not to preach, and the swashbucklers whom Dumas has immortalized in 'The Three Musqueteers' were quite as incorrigible ruffians as Mr. Browne's idealized bushranger. If we want edification on this subject we must turn to the narratives of Bonwick, or Francis Hare, who paint the genuine article with the gilt off, and then admire the talent which can, from such unpromising materials, evoke a character that rivets our interest, and often stirs our pity.

If in 'Robbery under Arms' we have the most vividly-drawn picture of the conditions of outlawry in New South Wales a generation ago, we have in 'The Miner's Right' (London, Macmillan, 1890) one of the most realistic accounts of the exciting

life of the gold-digger in the Fifties. The story must by this time be too well known to need any description. Notwithstanding a tendency to over-amplification of detail in description, it is, without doubt, entitled to a prominent place in the fiction of incident and adventure. It does not pretend to any analysis of character, nor does it indulge in any politico-economic reflections on the hardships under which the diggers suffered, but it goes straight on with a bright and breezy account of the courage and endurance which were the general characteristics of the parti-coloured crowd of all sorts and conditions of men, who toiled at the most exciting occupation the world of labour has ever known. The picture bears the impress of extended personal experience, and the result is the fixing in a permanent form of the photograph of a condition of society distinctive of Australia, but now only a fading tradition, even to us. And underlying all the stirring incidents of the story, there is the necessary phase of the love that endures through trial and separation, and is rewarded with orthodox propriety in the end by the happy union and prospective earthly paradise, sought, alas! in this case, away from Australia.

In addition to the four novels already mentioned, Mr. Browne has published 'A Sydney-Side Saxon' (London, 1891) and 'Nevermore' (London, 1892), the latter having originally appeared in *The Centennial Magazine* (Sydney, 1889). He has also reprinted some of his shorter stories in book form, and in his latest production, 'The Sealskin Cloak' (London, 1896), breaks fresh ground altogether. The im-

pressions acquired in the few weeks of a rapid overland journey to Europe, though they may serve as a peg on which to hang some pictorial writing, and a good deal of sentimental conversation, are but a poor substitute for the full knowledge which made Mr. Browne such a master of the subjects he dealt with in his earlier novels. But it is possible that the English reader, taking both on trust, may consider the Egyptian episodes quite as realistic as the Australian.

MRS. CROSS, or, as she is better known to local readers by her maiden name, 'Ada Cambridge,' is entitled to the first place amongst the novelists of her sex in Australia, not merely because she has published ten volumes, and one or two more are announced as nearly ready, but by reason of the quality of her work, and the varied distinctiveness of her several stories. In this respect she is in marked contrast to Rolf Boldrewood, whose repertoire is so circumscribed, that by the time the reader has finished a course of his novels, it is almost impossible to mentally distinguish one from the other.

Mrs. Cross has a happy faculty in the delineation of character by light suggestive touches, rather than by elaborate introductions. She is extremely prolific in the production of the children of her imagination, but she keeps them all well in hand, with the result that they play their parts, important or trivial, with a fidelity to their antecedents which seems born of much careful rehearsing. In 'A Marked Man,' probably the strongest of her stories, and in 'Not all in Vain,' there are powerful

elements of the tragic and romantic, and in 'Fidelis' there is very genuine pathos; and yet the general tenor of her stories is one of a graceful peacefulness, implied by a certain delicacy of touch, and a pervading sense of fidelity to nature. Take as a sample 'The Three Miss Kings' (London, 1891), one of the most popular of her novels, without intending to give it preference over all the others. It narrates the fortunes and misfortunes of three young girls, who have been brought up to womanhood almost isolated from their fellow-creatures, in a picturesque but unpretending bush home on the western sea-board of Victoria. The death of their father, a morbidly secretive recluse, leaves them their own mistresses, with a little property, and a modest income of £100 a year each. The "restless, unsatisfied longing" natural to their age and surroundings impels them to see the world, and on their way to accomplish this desire, they take Melbourne as a foretaste of the anticipated delights of European travel. In the mind of the ordinary novel-reader, youth and beauty are too generally held to include naturally all other perfections, but the critical caviller might possibly object that these young ladies possessed accomplishments almost incompatible with their earlier surroundings. The gradual unfolding of the mystery of their accomplished mother's secluded life, accounts for inherited tastes not commonly found in the bush, and the tender devotion that had supervised their up-bringing explains the result. The diverse characteristics of the respective suitors by whom they are respectively captured, are sketched with dis-

tinctive force, and the modest plot which develops their eventual great fortune is neatly worked out, without trying the reader's credulity. On the whole, it is a simple, cheerful, natural story, the chief end of which, as of all legitimate story-telling, is entertainment; for though it does touch on some of the problems which made 'Robert Elsmere' famous, they are very incidentally disposed of. The tendency of so much recent fiction is to harrow up the reader's feelings, that it comes as a relief to read a book in which there is not a single villain, male or female. If from its placidity it may not take a strong hold upon male readers, its delicate insight into the ways of girlhood, and the loving tenderness with which they are presented, ought to make it popular with the gentler sex of all ages.

In striking contrast to the story just mentioned is 'A Marked Man' (London, 1890), called, when first published in the *Australasian*, 'A Black Sheep,' which is undoubtedly the most powerful, as it is probably the best known of this writer's stories. For full and consistently maintained delineation of character, for sequence and interest of action, and for vivid glimpses of the struggles of a tempestuous and rebellious heart, that scorns all conventional discipline, there has been nothing finer produced in Australia. Indeed, it is not easy to call to mind any novel in which the great masters of English fiction have treated of the carking miseries of a *mésalliance*, extending over a quarter of a century, with equal power. And, apart from the sustained interest of the narrative, and the delicate humour that relieves

the strain of deep pathos surrounding Richard Delavel's later life, the book contains some exceptionally brilliant descriptive touches. They are not, as is often the case, expanded to fill up an episodal interval, but are as much a part of the story as the raciest dialogue, and some of them, even taken out of their context, are admirable specimens of literary skill.

The book has been so widely circulated in Australia, that it is unnecessary to give any outline of the story. Those who have read it will need no eulogium; those who have not can confidently be promised a pleasure to come.

'Not all in Vain' (London, 1892) illustrates the capacity of Mrs. Cross to awaken the reader's fullest sympathy with her heroines without endowing them with angelic beauty, or fascinatingly innocent youthfulness. Katherine Knowles, who plays the leading rôle in this story, is thus described: "A tall, well-developed, well-bred girl, she was technically plain, but virtually beautiful, her irregular-shaped, wide-browed, square-jawed face having a quality of grave sweetness and intellectual strength that made it impressive and attractive to the cultivated eye." Now, while most of the bewitching women in the book come to grief, in one form or another, this goodness and innate strength of character carry the heroine through a very troubled life-history without leading her into any action that seems at variance with what might be looked for under given circumstances. Once only is the writer led astray in the desire to pose her heroine on a higher pinnacle than

is possible to poor humanity. That is in the interview with the inconstant Forbes Alexander, when she allows her degenerated hero to maunder about her desertion of him, without confronting him with the real cause. The life-long devotion to her unstable lover, the slowly awakening recognition of the moral decadence that his long imprisonment has worked, the bitter suddenness of the discovery of his transferred affections, leave nothing to be desired in the telling. But no woman that ever lived could have allowed such taunts to pass unanswered, when the real culprit blusteringly pretends to be the injured victim, with the full knowledge of both of them that it is a hateful lie. One other mistake in the story, as inclining to the morbid, is the punishment of Forbes. No jury, with the facts properly put before them, would have convicted him of wilful murder. At the most it would have been manslaughter, and the sentence would certainly not have exceeded five years. This would have been quite long enough for the transformation stages, and with very slight alterations, the *dénouement* might have been reached more in keeping with poetical justice, and the claims of the gentle and faithful Jim Hammond. There are a large number of characters introduced into this story, many of them only puppets of the hour, but the individuality with which they are endowed, in briefest sentences or scraps of conversation, is one of the special merits of the stories of Mrs. Cross.

Admitting the excellent literary quality of all this lady's work, it may be asked, what is the general



tendency of her novels? Well, most of them are somewhat of a protest against those conventional usages which make up the Gospel according to Mrs. Grundy. In some of them the marriage tie is a thing too grievous to be borne; in others, the iniquity of binding an unyielding theological creed upon a mind capable of expansion, is cried out against with pathetic indignation; and generally the shams of social life, to many of which familiarity has blunted our perception, are shown up in their true colours. Her chiefest sin in the eyes of Mrs. Grundy will certainly be the refusal to regard the marriage question as a thing settled for all time, and unimprovable. It may be pleaded in mitigation, that she is content to point out—and with convincing power too—the evils and life-long miseries that may and that do arise in many cases, where knowledge that would have averted the sacrifice comes too late, after the irrevocable step has been taken. So far all right-minded people are with her, and if to make an evil widely known is one of the steps towards its amelioration, she deserves our thanks. But she does not herself offer any guaranteed solution of this most difficult problem; nor does she propound through her novels the way the woman of the future will deal with it, after the manner of Grant Allen.

MRS. CAMPBELL PRAED is a native of Queensland, and a daughter of a member of the Legislature of that Colony. In productiveness she takes the lead of all Australian writers, having published upwards of twenty separate novels, besides contributing

numerous short sketches to the occasional volumes issued by the Australian coterie in London, and many interesting articles on travel and kindred subjects to the English, American, and colonial magazines. Her pen has been actively employed since 1880, and she has often published two, sometimes three novels in the year. There are indications in the later stories that the pace has been too fast, but there is great freshness and power in her earlier work. All her books have been published in London, where she has lived for the last twenty years; most of them have met with marked public approbation, and count their circulation by many thousands. And it must be admitted that they honestly deserve it for they exhibit great dramatic force, a fascinating interest of narrative, and a marked intensity in the sombre passages, that would make a reputation in the literature of any country. It is certain that the interest these books have aroused in England has had an important influence in gaining a hearing for Australian writers, and a standard has been set that is well worthy the emulation of the colonial aspirant. But they differ materially in tone from the work of the novelists we have been considering. They deal more strongly and more exclusively with the social and political life of the Antipodes than any of the other novelists have done, and it cannot be denied that, as a rule, they present our prominent men in a rather sorry light.

Mrs. Praed does not, it is true, descend to the libellous style which gained for Mrs. Trollope the fervent hatred of the Americans, but there is an air

of cynicism, and a vein of depreciation of colonials and their surroundings, which makes her stories less acceptable on the spot where the scenes are laid, though at the same time it probably gives piquancy to them for the English palate.

Twenty years in the brilliant circles of London social, literary, and artistic life—the apex of the world for people with means, leisure, and intellect—has doubtless dulled the appreciation of our unconventional freedom, and exaggerated our humdrum limitations. Most of her Australian heroines are devoured by *ennui*. If they live in the bush, they are oppressed by the overwhelming silence of unpeopled domains; if in the towns, by the petty parochial incidents that lazily stir their jaded interest. The droughts and the floods, the shearing and the branding, the land laws and the free selectors, the political squabbles and the rancour of Parliamentary elections, seem to bound their horizon, and to shut out the glimpses which they fain would have of a world where romance and chivalry, love and ambition, should be ruling factors. Hence these heroines, as a rule, are given to throw themselves into the arms of the distinguished visitors who find their way condescendingly, or by force of circumstances, into these southern wilds. There are a few Australian heroes in the long list of Mrs. Praed's creations who compare favourably with the more polished imported article, notably Frank Hallett in 'Outlaw and Law-maker,' and Dyson Maddox in 'Longleat of Koralbyn.' But, as a rule, the sterling merit of her best men is somewhat discounted by associating them

with narrow, provincial prejudices, and brusqueness, not to say bluntness, of speech and behaviour.

Mrs. Praed's greatest strength lies in the construction of finely dramatic episodes, and next to that in a vividly realistic power of description. In characterization she concentrates her forces on the representatives of her own sex, and her male contingent suffers by comparison. But in spite of the clear-cut presentation, and the carefully worked out analysis of her heroines, only a very few of them are lovable persons. Perhaps they represent a true average, taken from that bulk of humanity whence heroines are drawn, but really in the matter-of-fact, unheroic world there is a far wider diffusion of happiness than could be imagined if Mrs. Praed's stories were to be accepted as the basis of our calculation.

Love in various forms, successful or despairing, coarsely vehement or tenderly refined, merely conventional or devotedly self-effacing, forms not only the *motif* of most of the stories, but is always associated with the strongest passages in them, and will be found to be the dominating theme. Mrs. Praed's style has little in sympathy with the tranquil flame which Cupid kindled in the breasts of the three Miss Kings, but in the tumultuous phases of the absorbing passion she wields a pen worthy of Hall Caine or Thomas Hardy. Few people can settle down to read twenty novels by one author, and for those who cannot afford this diversion 'Longleat of Koralbyn' (London, Bentley, 1887), originally published in 1881 as 'Policy and Passion,' may be recom-

mended as combining most of the strong points of Mrs. Praed's writing. In constructive power and interest of narrative, in cynical humour, in intensity of passion, and in the grim tragedy of its climax, it is a novel not easily forgotten. The coarse-fibred, passionate-natured, strong-willed and clever Long-leat, and his picturesque, wayward, and dissatisfied daughter Honoria, are characters that will live in Australian fiction.

'Miss Jacobsen's Choice' (London, 1887) is equally illustrative of Australian life as developed in Queensland, and is a story of a more cheerful character than the former. It may be taken as one of the best of Mrs. Praed's books from the society point of view, treated with abundant humour. But for genuine presentment of bush life, and its unique experiences, for photographic accuracy of both scenic and domestic surroundings, into which is woven a love-story of deep interest, she has done nothing better than 'The Romance of a Station' (London, 1889). In the preface she tells us, "The opening chapters picture faithfully enough the scene of one of my own early homes, and describe life on an island which may be found marked on any map of Australia. Almost all the incidents are real, and even the most romantic of the episodes have their foundation in fact." And certainly she has succeeded in making the reader feel like a welcome guest at her own fireside, and a participator alike in the pleasures and the discomforts of the home so vividly described.

'Tasma,' the *nom de plume* of MADAME COUVREUR, is a lady of whose connection with Australian liter-

ature the local critical press has always been proud. Though born in London, she was only an infant when landed in Hobart, forty years ago, and the early years of her life were passed in the garden colony, where her father, Mr. Alfred Huybers, was a leading mercantile man. She resided for a short time in Victoria, and commenced her literary career there by contributions to the *Australasian*. In 1879 she went to Europe, where, with the exception of an occasional visit to Australia, she has since resided. She distinguished herself by numerous critical and artistic essays, contributed to the leading English, French, and Belgian reviews, and even made her mark as a lecturer under the auspices of the Geographical Society of Paris. Though she had given to the world many pleasant little sketches before she took up with the more general literary work, it was not until after her marriage with Monsieur Couvreur in 1885 that she turned her attention seriously to fiction. Four years later she published ‘Uncle Piper of Piper’s Hill’ (London, 1889), still regarded as the strongest of her novels. It is essentially a love-story, in which three pairs of lovers are so continually at cross purposes, and transfer their affections with such aggravating disregard of consequences, as to plunge the reader in a sea of doubt and perplexity about the final wind-up. The characters on which ‘Tasma’ has lavished her most constructive skill are the aristocratic pauper Mr. Cavendish, his daughter Sara, and the choleric parvenu Uncle Piper. The former is made almost too contemptible, a compound of Mantalini and

Micawber, with the added sins of the blackest ingratitude to his benefactor, and the meanest of bullies to his devoted wife. Sara Cavendish is a strongly-drawn portrait of a most objectionable type of woman, very rarely, it must be hoped, encountered in real life. A veritable whited sepulchre, of supremest beauty in face and figure, but vain, selfish, greedy, untruthful, and bad-tempered. She is so objectionable in all she says and does, that it is a joy to find her left husband-hunting in the last page, after having rejected several impassioned offers. Uncle Piper is a clever conception of the self-made man, strong-willed, hard-natured, and violent under opposition. But his violence is something over-done. In the scene describing his accidental discovery of his son's engagement to Laura, his vindictive outbursts of rage savour of a ferocity scarcely human, and appear incompatible with a temperament which could lavish such unstinted generosity on his sister and his nieces. So in the later chapters his conversion to comparative affability is brought about with a suddenness that seems strained, notwithstanding the palliative influences of his long night vigils by the bedside of his little daughter.

The methods of delineation of character are entirely different from those of Ada Cambridge, who makes her actors introduce themselves, and mainly develops their special qualities from their conversation. 'Tasma,' on the other hand, devotes a good many pages to what might be called philosophical analysis of the motives of action of her chief characters, and never leaves the reader in doubt as to how they

would behave under given circumstances. Heredity, temperament, mental or physical defect, lack of education, and uncongenial surroundings are all insisted on, in connection with cause and effect, more after the manner of the essayist than the novelist.

'In Her Earliest Youth' (London, 1890) is another story devoted to colonial life. The long-drawn-out woes of the heroine, who has made a gratuitous and altogether unnecessary sacrifice by marrying a man who is not her affinity, makes rather a severe trial on the reader's patience. This main fault is, however, to a great extent redeemed by the finished literary style in which the story is presented; by some picturesque touches of the descriptive order, and by delightful studies of child life full of sympathetic tenderness.

'Not Counting the Cost' (London, 1895) is a much more cheerful story than either of the others, and shows a considerable faculty of bright humour, though it lacks the analytical power which is so strongly developed in 'Uncle Piper.'

'The Penance of Portia James' (London, 1891) only touches incidentally on Australian topics, but it is a delightful story, full of vivid pictures of artist life in Paris and London, and dealing with subjects in which Madame Couvreur has long been recognized as a most competent authority.

MARY GAUNT, now Mrs. Lindsay Miller, must be added to the list of Australian writers who have won a reputation beyond the limits of the Colonies.



She is the daughter of a Victorian County Court Judge, and very early in life made a favourable impression by the vivid descriptive power which marked the numerous short stories she contributed to the *Australasian* and other Melbourne papers. All her subjects are essentially local, and in the course of the extended series, for she must have published quite a score of these stories, she has practically exhausted what English readers assume to be the Australian repertoire. Bushrangers and cattle-stealers, mining accidents and bush fires, fights with blacks and strikes by shearers, the tragedies of "out back" and the perils of the sea,—all these and other colonial "properties" have been worked into episodes in the career of the squatter, the miner, the speculator, and the politician, for every cent of value that is in them. The bush fire has a fascination which young Australian writers find it hard to resist, but it must be admitted that in Miss Gaunt's story, 'The Other Man,' she has penned a description of such a visitation in the Otway forest that is so luridly vivid and painfully realistic as to leave nothing better to be desired.

Several of Miss Gaunt's stories were contributed to English magazines, and a selection from her scattered pieces has been published under the title of 'The Moving Finger' (London, 1895). It was very favourably noticed by the English literary journals, but it would be a more genuinely representative book if it had been brightened by the infusion of a little more cheerfulness, the pre-

dominant note in the pieces selected being badly tragic.

'Dave's Sweetheart' (London, 1894) is the best known and most popular of her novels, and shows great dramatic force, as well as literary skill in construction. Jenny Carter, the sweetheart, is quite an original study in character-drawing, so uncommon in daily life and yet worked out with such careful regard to consequence as to suggest a living model. Brought up amid the squalid surroundings of a bash shanty, neglected by a brutal father, steeped in ignorance and slatternly in person, such mental power as she possesses is concentrated on her ill-regulated passion for the handsome but worthless reprobate, Dave Anderson. The manner in which this scoundrel masters her feeble will and, to serve his own ends, persuades her into a marriage with the worthy police-sergeant, her subsequent flight to her outlawed paramour, and to her death, are told with consummate power. But the key-note of the story is grimly tragic, especially towards the close, and notwithstanding its admittedly artistic handling, the impression left on the reader's mind is actively painful.

It is only about three years ago that MISS ETHEL TURNER published her story of 'The Seven Little Australians' (London, 1894), followed a year later by its sequel, 'The Family at Misrule' (London, 1895). Though scarcely coming under the category of novels, they were promptly recognized as charmingly fresh and vivacious specimens of a form of

fiction not hitherto acclimatized. Miss Turner is entitled to be regarded as the Australian exponent of the humours, the beauties, the troubles, and the mysteries of child life. The children she presents to us are not artificial creations like Little Nell, or Paul Dombey, or Uncle Tom's Eva, but the genuine article as we find it in daily life, loving and lovable, simple and confiding, but withal generally more or less troublesome. In the first story, the "seven" are in the very juvenile stage, out of which it is difficult to evoke incident of wide dramatic interest, but their sayings and doings are so naturally portrayed, that they have a special fascination for mothers and for young girls. But in the second story, with added years to the little company of actors, and with added experience in handling them, Miss Turner has developed considerable strength in characterization, and presented a story that will interest people of all ages and both sexes. For the studies of the various members of the Family at Misrule are full of keen, sympathetic insight, and each one has its sharply-defined distinctive qualities. When we come to 'The Story of a Baby' (London, 1895), a change of style and sentiment, and a change for the worse, is noticeable. The Baby is an unimportant episode, for the characters who fill the pages are a very young and very foolish married couple, whose inexcusable quarrels are a disgrace to both of them. The attempt which the authoress makes to awaken sympathy fails before the reader's indignation, and an impetuous desire to knock the heads of the silly

young couple together. Altogether the story is unpleasant, and the *dénouement* artificial in the extreme. But Miss Turner is young, and in some directions she has shown great capacity. It is probable that she will yet make a considerable reputation as a novelist, if she will take to heart the rule laid down by Walter Besant, that "everything in fiction which is invented, and is not the result of personal experience and observation, is worthless."

From the foregoing notices it will be seen how much the Australian community is indebted to the gentler sex for the production of most of its sustained fiction, which, from the purity of its tone, and its disregard of unanswerable social and sexual problems, is rightly welcome in hundreds of family circles, as a healthful means of stimulating mental activity. And in its teaching aspect,—for all good fiction teaches,—it sets forth the influences that mould character and the motives that influence mankind, which otherwise we might only learn by the too often painful lessons of personal experience.

For the rest, numerous though they be, there is neither space nor occasion for any detailed criticism. It remains only to mention a few briefly. The prolific FERGUS HUME, of whom it can be said that the clever construction of his plots is counterbalanced by the baldness of his style, and the slipshod character of his English.

GUY BOOTHBY, a native of Australia, but latterly residing in London, who seems to have very quickly

discovered what so many of his brother scribes are vainly seeking for—the command of wealth by the use of his pen. According to his own statement to an interviewer last Christmas, he had followed literature as a profession for two years, and was then at work on his seventeenth novel! Any one who has read ‘Dr. Nikola,’ or ‘The Beautiful White Devil,’ will recognize that they require no very profound study for their production. A vivid imagination, large experience of travel, and a daring disregard of probabilities, carry him into realms from which the stunned reader emerges with the sensation of having been the victim of an opium debauch.

LOUIS BECKE, who has recently announced to a sympathetic world his discovery that “literature does not pay,” and yet whose South Sea Island stories, when published in Sydney, created such a sensation that the local critics united to proclaim him as the superior of Robert Louis Stevenson! Such a comparison with one of the most perfect masters of English is an outrage. Though there is some strong writing in Becke’s stories, and an abundance of local picturesqueness, they are on the whole coarse in tone and fleshly in colour. Many of them positively reek with gore, and nearly all are unpleasantly free in their pictures of a very loose morality.

HUME NISBET, whose latest Australian novel, ‘The Swampers’ (London, 1897), contained such violent attacks upon men and things in Sydney, as to cause its sale to be prohibited under penalty of legal proceedings. Society will be the gainer if the

prohibition is enforced, for it is an unwholesome story, and, like his previous novels, gives a most distorted view of colonial life.

B. L. FARJEON, whose early days were spent in Victoria and New Zealand, and whom some of his injudicious critics have called the "only legitimate successor of Dickens." If to be an imitator of the weakest side of Dickens' style, his somewhat theatrical pathos, is to be a "legitimate successor," then the designation may pass, but it is difficult to find anything else to base it on.

H. B. MARRIOT WATSON, who has given us the best romance of adventure amongst the Maoris, 'The Web of the Spider' (London, 1891), and has also done some very good work in short stories, modelled on the American form, which Bret Harte made so famous.

PRICE WARUNG, whose 'Tales of the Early Days' (Melbourne, George Robertson, 1894) are things "to shudder at, not to see." They deal with times, with people, with passions, and, alas! with realities, that would be better forgotten than perpetuated in fiction. The genius of Victor Hugo, of Charles Reade, or of Marcus Clarke may make the galleys, the gaol, and the triangles the background for the setting of a powerful drama of human misery, but a series of short stories of official brutality, of petty intrigue, and noisome associations is too hideous to contemplate as a phase of mental recreation.

But why extend the list? It would almost fill the remaining pages, and degenerate into a mere

catalogue. Enough has been said to show, at least, that there is a school of Australian fiction, and that, like all other schools, it contains much that is really good, more, perhaps, that is feeble and indifferent, and a small residuum that is positively bad and injurious. It is not possible to point to any country where the latter qualification could be omitted.

## CHAPTER IV

### GENERAL LITERATURE

THE literary activity of a country may be fairly inferred from an examination of its poetry and fiction, hence the length to which the preceding pages have extended. But although the vast majority of readers delight rather in works of imagination than in the solid records of fact, it is desirable to show that Australia has not been without diligent workers, who have sought to minister to something more enduring than amusement. The historian in Australia suffers from the want of a picturesque background, the only romantic episodes upon which he can venture a flight of eloquence being the deeds of the courageous explorers who have penetrated the mysteries of the continent. And yet about fifty so-called 'Histories of Australia,' and its separate colonies, have been issued during the century now closing. Indeed more than one 'History of New South Wales' had found its way into print before the settlement at Port Jackson was out of its teens.

The substantial quartos in which Captain Arthur Phillip, Governor Hunter, Colonel David Collins, and others, set forth the daily doings of official and convict life in painful detail, formed the



foundation upon which most of the subsequent volumes were built. They scarcely belong to Australian literature,—if indeed they belong to literature at all,—for they were all published in England, and mostly written by men whose connection with the Colony had only been incidental.

In 1819 appeared the first historical account of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, written by a native of the Colony, MR. W. C. WENTWORTH. So far as the annals of the settlement were concerned they were mere compilations, from the same source as the others, somewhat baldly presented. But in the second half of the volume is a fiery denunciation of the existing form of government, and a trenchant exposure of the abuses which it shielded. The indignation of the writer often carries him into passages suggestive of that brilliant eloquence which afterwards distinguished him as an advocate. His impetuous demand for the reforms which the Colony undoubtedly required, had no doubt some influence in expediting them, for the book was published in London, and went through three editions.

JOHN DUNMORE LANG, D.D., the Presbyterian patriarch of New South Wales, was perhaps the most prolific writer that the mother colony has produced. From the time of his arrival in 1823, to his death in 1878, he had always one or two vigorous controversies on hand; in fact, he seemed to live amidst a coruscation of pamphlets, press articles, platform orations, and Supreme Court actions. His untiring energy and iron-framed personality denied him the repose which most travellers allow them-

selves on board ship, and in the numerous voyages which he made to England and back, he always set himself to the execution of some literary work. In one of his earliest trips he compiled his 'Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales,' and published it in London in 1834. Three years later a second edition was issued, and in 1852 a third edition appeared, revised and enlarged. Again in 1875 the venerable author took up the tedious task of revision, and added a further twenty-five years to the period of his annals. This latest edition, in two neat volumes, has had a large circulation, and contains a sufficiently full narrative of the turbulent early days of the Colony. But when it comes to deal with the political events in which the writer took part, it is warped by such partisan bias as to make it unreliable. On such questions as popular representation, immigration, or education, there was only one opinion possible to any honest man, and that was the opinion laid down by the reverend doctor. He seemed incapable of allowing sincerity of conviction to any opponent, and the readiness with which he imputed moral turpitude and sinister motives to all who differed from him, was not infrequently exhibited in his books. It is not denied that Dr. Lang very often had right on his side, and on broad constitutional issues he was nearly always for the cause of liberty and progress, but he actually created much of the opposition he encountered, and embittered all of it, by incessantly banging the big drum, and calling on the other side to "come on." As a literary performance the History is unsatis-

factory. It is discursive and spasmodic to a degree; its continuity is hindered by all sorts of irrelevant matter; quite one-third of it reads like a mixture of guide-book and gazetteer, and it has no index. The assertive egotism which marks most of Dr. Lang's writings, earned for this book the sarcastic suggestion in the *Westminster Review*, that it should have been called 'The History of Dr. Lang, to which is added the History of New South Wales.'

'The History of Australian Discovery and Colonization,' by SAMUEL BENNETT, published in Sydney in 1867, is a most valuable contribution to the early colonial annals. Mr. Bennett became the proprietor of the *Empire* newspaper, after Sir Henry Parkes had made it a power in the political world, and had simultaneously involved it in financial difficulties. In the columns of that paper were commenced the series of historical articles which were afterwards reprinted and issued in parts, until in 1867 the volume was completed, bringing the narrative down to 1831. It had been Mr. Bennett's intention to issue a further instalment, but the pressure of journalistic work—for he was also the proprietor of the *Evening News* and the *Town and Country Journal*—denied him the necessary leisure, and he died in 1878. In appearance the book is unattractive, for it is a squat volume of 660 pages, indifferently printed on poor paper. But in substance it is a mine of interesting information, accurate in detail, impartial in judgment, simple in diction, and well arranged in sequence. It has been long out of print, and is

now so scarce as to be priced in a recent bookseller's catalogue at £4 10s.

'The History of New South Wales,' by T. H. BRAIM, published in 1846, and that by RODERICK FLANAGAN, in 1862, are both re-hashes of the old material, without any added graces of style or treatment. The latter is the more reliable compilation of the two, but at its best it is oppressively prosy and uninteresting. The excuse for issuing this kind of book, which after all is a mere repository of facts, for some future historian's use, no longer exists; for the Government of New South Wales has undertaken the publication of a valuable series of volumes, to contain intact all the original records relating to the Colony which are in the archives of the various departments of State in England, or in the possession of the Colonial Secretary in Sydney. The first volume was edited by MR. G. B. BARTON, the well-known barrister, and the second by MR. F. M. BLADEN of Sydney; but so abundant is the material that is considered worth preserving for the use of the historian who will be able to transmute it into literature, that the two stout volumes only bring the records down to 1794, thus embracing only some half-dozen years of the Colony's existence.

Tasmania can boast of two historians, the REV. JOHN WEST and MR. JAMES FENTON. The work of the former, published in Launceston in 1852, is well and faithfully done, and although the diction is not what might have been expected from a man who was afterwards for some twenty years editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, it is an interesting and

readable narrative of a very depressing social condition. Mr. Fenton came later on the scene, his book being published in Hobart in 1884. He is a landed proprietor who has lived in the Colony for over sixty years, and been an eye-witness of much that he relates. The History is a modestly written, unpretending volume, in the earlier part largely indebted to West, but bringing the story down quite thirty years later. He does not claim credit for much original research, and he always honestly acknowledges the sources of his information.

'South Australia, its History, Resources, and Productions,' by W. HARCUS (London, 1876), was published under the authority of the Government of that Colony. The first half of the volume was written by Mr. Marcus, who, like Mr. West, was originally an Independent minister, but left the Church for the editorship of the *Advertiser*. It contains a succinct and readable account of the foundation of the settlement under the Wakefield *régime*, and of its subsequent progress. The remainder of the volume is composed of botanical, statistical, and other scientific papers by local experts.

A much more interesting volume on this Colony is 'The Constitutional History of South Australia from 1836 to 1857,' by the HON. BOYLE TRAVERS FINNIS (Adelaide, 1886). This is the work of a man who took an active part in the building up of the community from its very foundations, and who is so imbued with his subject as to pass on some of his enthusiasm to the reader. Commencing

life in the army, he sold out to join the first expedition for settling South Australia, and accompanied Colonel Light as Assistant-Surveyor. From this starting-point he rose rapidly through several important positions in the Civil Service, until he became the Colonial Secretary, and for a time Acting Governor of the Colony. With such an active part in the history which he writes, it would be unreasonable not to expect some display of the first person singular, but, allowing for the circumstances, he is fairly reticent of his own merits.

In Victoria, MR. WILLIAM WESTGARTH issued the first history bearing the name of the Colony. It was published in Edinburgh in 1853, and takes the form of a descriptive account of the Colony at a time when the output of gold was attracting the attention of all the world. The historical part is very brief, but the book contains much information respecting the progress of the gold discoveries, and their social and financial results. Mr. Westgarth was a member of the original Legislative Council, and a prominent merchant in Melbourne for many years, hence his book is something like an extended report of the Chamber of Commerce, flavoured with politics. He revisited Melbourne in 1888, after an absence of a quarter of a century, and wrote 'Personal Recollections of Early Melbourne,' and some other volumes of interesting reminiscences.

'The History of Victoria, from its Settlement to the Death of Sir Charles Hotham,' by THOMAS McCOMBIE, was published in Melbourne in 1858. The author says in his preface that most of the books professing

to treat on Victoria have been intended for European readers, and have little interest for colonists, whereas this book, being intended for home consumption, should possess some value in the eyes of a Victorian public. And he laid himself out accordingly to give importance to matters of quite parochial interest, and to chronicle details of meetings and speeches which are somewhat wearisome reading to-day. Despite the many defects of the book—its want of proportion, its inconsecutive arrangement, its adoption of the conventional newspaper reporter's style, and its mean typographical dress,—it contains a mass of information relating to the Colony prior to 1855 which is not readily accessible elsewhere. Indeed there is no other book that gives so full a picture of the social and political life of Melbourne from 1840 to the gold era as this volume. The chief difficulty is to know where to find the record of any particular event, since it has neither index nor table of contents.

But probably Victorians owe more to MR. JAMES BONWICK than to any other writer for the work of compiling, in an accessible form, their early annals. A school-master by profession, he commenced his colonial career in Tasmania, and subsequently resided for over twenty years in Victoria, eventually gravitating to London, where he has been employed by the respective Colonial Governments in the discovery and transcription of important public documents buried in the Public Records Office, the Colonial Office, and other departments of the State.

When quite a young man, he commenced in 1841

to collect materials for a history of the Black War in Van Diemen's Land, and for more than fifty years he has pursued with enthusiasm the task of gathering into book form everything of interest bearing upon early colonial annals. From first to last he has published quite fifty volumes and pamphlets on the subject which may be said to have taken possession of him, and though there is no display of literary grace in his books, they represent an immense amount of conscientious labour, are marked by general accuracy and perspicacity, and from an educational point of view have been of great advantage to young Australians. His 'Last of the Tasmanians,' and 'Daily Life and Origin of the Tasmanians,' both published in London in 1870, are valuable contributions to anthropology, and undoubtedly give the fullest and most reliable account of a strange race that has been practically extirpated by the white settlers.

During the efflorescent period of book-making in Victoria, 1888, Messrs. McCarron, Bird and Co. published by subscription 'Victoria and its Metropolis.' The first volume contains an admirable history of Victoria, written by MR. ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND, lavishly illustrated in a most artistic manner. The somewhat cumbersome form of the complete work, in two large quarto volumes, and its practically prohibitive cost, have prevented its attaining the circulation which its merit deserves, but there are manifest reasons which preclude its review at length in these pages.

New Zealand, in whole or part, has found numerous



chroniclers. The first, and best, for the period covered, down to 1858, is 'The Story of New Zealand, Past and Present, Savage and Civilized,' by DR. A. S. THOMSON (London, John Murray, 1859). The writer, in the capacity of surgeon to the 58th Regiment, resided for many years in the Colony, and having made a special study of the native character, under exceptionally favourable circumstances, he is enabled to write with a judicial impartiality the story of the unhappy conflict of races, which through mismanagement and misunderstanding was protracted over fifty years. The most picturesque story of the great struggle with the natives in the north is in 'Old New Zealand, by a PAKEHA MAORI' (London, Bentley, 1876), which was written by JUDGE MANING, a man who qualified himself for his work by marrying a Maori wife, and being naturalized into the Ngapuhi tribe. It is a singularly vivid and readable book, and gives the most realistic picture of life in New Zealand in the early days ever written.

The most voluminous history of this Colony is that of MR. G. W. RUSDEN, published in London in 1883. This book is the only one that embraces the history of both islands, from their discovery down to the date of publication. The attraction which the subject has for the author has supported him in his laborious researches through a wilderness of Blue Books and Parliamentary Papers. The too free use of these materials *in extenso* is responsible for the inordinate bulk of the record, which fills three stout volumes. Mr. Rusden's facts are vouched for by abundant authorities, but his inferences are not

always so well supported. That grave injustice has been done, from time to time, to the aborigines of New Zealand no one can doubt, and it is impossible not to endorse many of Mr. Rusden's indictments of the executive Government of the day. But in his severe denunciations he often includes the men whose duty compelled them to carry out instructions without question, however uncongenial the task may have been. His fiery indignation overmasters his judgment, and in his position as counsel for the Aborigines Protection Society, he treats many of the prominent actors much as a cross-examining barrister of a certain type would treat a hostile witness. It is much to be regretted that such an important contribution to colonial history as this undoubtedly is should be marred by the strong expression of so many hasty judgments.

Of the general histories of Australia, that of Mr. Rusden, published in London in the same year as his *New Zealand*, is entitled to first mention. The issue of these two important and voluminous works, the year after he retired from his position as the Clerk of Parliaments in Victoria, would appear to indicate that the light duties of such an official position had enabled him to indulge in the recreation of literary work, to which he brought abundant energy and industry. His position for some time as Clerk of the Executive Council, and his long connection with Parliamentary life, afforded him great facilities for an intimate knowledge of the inner workings of colonial politics.

The 'History of Australia' contains over two

thousand pages of very solid type, and presents a feast not easily assimilated. For there is no lightness of construction, and at times there is relentless amplification of facts. Indeed the attitude taken by the writer is that of one who has to controvert often repeated mis-statements and mis-representations of people and of events, and, as he expresses it, "to fortify each position by cumulating circumstantial proofs." There can be no doubt that Mr. Rusden aims at setting forth the truth as he believed it, and he maintains his opinions with the scornful independence of a Gibbon. But, like the combative Dr. Lang,—for whom, by the way, he has nothing but contemptuous epithets,—the truth was always coincident with the opinions of G. W. Rusden. It is impossible to read even a few chapters of the later portions of the history, especially that relating to Victoria, without realizing and regretting the extent of the personal bias, and the insufficiency of the grounds on which some public men are condemned. Apart from this aspect, the history is a meritorious and useful book; the style, though inclined to be pedantic, is dignified, and never lapses into commonplace. When all is said, it remains the library edition of Australian history to-day, and a second edition in three somewhat smaller volumes has been issued this year, in which it is said that several of the harsh judgments of the original book have been modified or withdrawn.

Though only incidentally allied to literature, properly so called, the magnificent but absurdly designated 'Picturesque Atlas of Australia,' published

in Sydney in 1886, is entitled to honourable mention. It is not an atlas, but an historical and descriptive account of each of the Colonies, in three large folio volumes; and for typography, paper, and illustration is undoubtedly the finest work yet produced in Australia. The letter-press was contributed by various well-known local writers, under the editorship of DR. GARRAN, the portion relating to Victoria being written by Mr. James Smith of Melbourne. The illustrations are mainly from original drawings by local artists of repute, and have been reproduced most creditably. The idea of this monumental work originated with some American speculators, and the company which they formed to carry it out expended over £200,000 in its production.

The period of the Australian Centenary was responsible for the publication of a large number of books of a professedly historical character, but they contain little original matter, many of them appropriating hundreds of pages of previous volumes without the faintest trace of acknowledgment.

As might be expected in a new country, travel and exploration have contributed very largely to books about Australia, and over two hundred volumes on this subject will be found on the shelves of the Melbourne Public Library. Of course in a large proportion of these it is the subject only which is Australian. The most important explorations, such as those of Sturt, Mitchell, Eyre, Gregory, and others, were the work of Englishmen, and their books were published in England. Few of these intrepid

veterans had the art of dressing their narratives in vivid, picturesque language. As a rule, while full of valuable information for the geographer, they are only expanded diaries of daily trials and hourly hardships. Except for the purpose of some special study, they are not now read in their entirety, but a very admirable summary of all the important work done in this field has been prepared by the REV. JULIAN TENISON WOODS in 'A History of the Discovery and Exploration of Australia' (London and Melbourne, 1865). The two solid volumes contain all that it is necessary to know of the gradually unfolding view of the Australian continent, and they have the advantage of showing the consecutive steps by which this knowledge was obtained, and of giving the results, with careful accuracy, in an eminently readable form.

Of the scores of Australian biographies of "eminent men," it may safely be said that at least ninety per cent. can only be of interest to the immediate friends of the individuals who "get into print." There are three biographies that stand out prominently, as recording the lives of men whose careers were indissolubly connected with the advancement of Australia. The sympathetic 'Memoir of George Higinbotham,' by PROFESSOR MORRIS of the Melbourne University (London, Macmillan, 1895), is a worthy record of an exceptional man. An Australian politician who subordinated the claims of party to the demands of conscience; a Judge, in whom culture and special training were set off by intense earnest-

ness and unwearied patience; and a citizen whose Spartan life and high ideals were an example to the community, and a charm to all who had the pleasure of knowing him.

The life of another and very different type of Australian politician, Sir Henry Parkes, by MR. CHAS. E. LYNE (Melbourne, George Robertson, 1896), is more valuable for the matter than for the manner. It is essentially a part, and an important part, in the history of New South Wales, and it throws strong lights upon many episodes connected with the political growth of the mother colony. Like Sir Henry's own volume, 'Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History,' the narrative revolves round a central sun, and to the unbiassed reader the effulgence tends to obscure all the other actors. Mr. Lyne has evidently performed a labour of love in writing this book, but the uniform laudation is pitched in somewhat too high a key.

The third noticeable biography is MR. EDWIN HODDER's 'George Fife Angas, Father and Founder of South Australia' (London, 1891). The title claims rather too much, but few men had a greater influence in directing the movements which resulted in the founding of that Colony than Mr. Angas, and his life's work was largely devoted to forwarding its interests. The story is told by his biographer with directness and simplicity, and is full of interesting information.

Marcus Clarke's prophecy, that the religion of the future Australian race would be "a kind of Presby-

terianism," is not yet fulfilled, and in the hundreds of volumes of Biblical elucidation, or controversy, and the thousands of sermons published in Australia, it is not possible to note any distinctive local colouring. It will probably be admitted that theological literature, as the exposition of a non-progressive form of science, is pretty much of the same character in all English-speaking Protestant countries. In the United States, where a stern religious earnestness was a marked characteristic of the principal founders of the community, their literature took an almost exclusively theological form during the first century. And the inevitable reaction which followed, from the narrowness of its type, is responsible for the Transcendentalism, Spiritism, Mormonism, and scores of other isms which have scandalized the orthodox, and given the philosophic student of human nature much material for investigation. But Australia has been singularly free from these spasmodic seizures, and except for an occasional rousing polemic, the colonists take but a languid interest in topics which the pulpit considers it desirable to discuss in print. As far as quantity is concerned, Australia has been relatively as well supplied with publications of this character as any other country, but the reception accorded to it would seem to indicate that the demand has been more than overtaken.

A large amount of valuable work in connection with science has been done in Australia, but comparatively little in book form has been published by natives of the Colonies. Few men have added more

to the dignity of our local literature than DR. W. E. HEARN, who was appointed to the chair of Modern History and Political Economy at the foundation of the Melbourne University, when he was only in his twenty-eighth year. For thirty-five years he laboured amongst us, writing his valuable books, editing an important newspaper, taking a representative share in active political life, and conducting his professorial duties at the University in a manner that won him the admiration and esteem of his classes. In this aspect he may be regarded as essentially an Australian, and the high estimation in which his books are held in England makes us proud to claim him.

The limits of space forbid the attempt to catalogue the host of writers in the minor walks of miscellaneous literature. Enough has been said to show, that in the leading departments of the profession of letters, Australia has sons and daughters with aspirations which are not easily daunted, either by tardy recognition or by a limited audience, but who work steadily on, in the belief that they are helping to broaden the foundations of a literature which, in another fifty years, will certainly be of vast extent, and will probably be marked by stronger local characteristics than at present. We are justified in looking for original thought, original social problems, and original philosophical theories; let us hope that in working them out in the printed page, the influence of the best of that grand literature which has been our heritage may always be apparent.

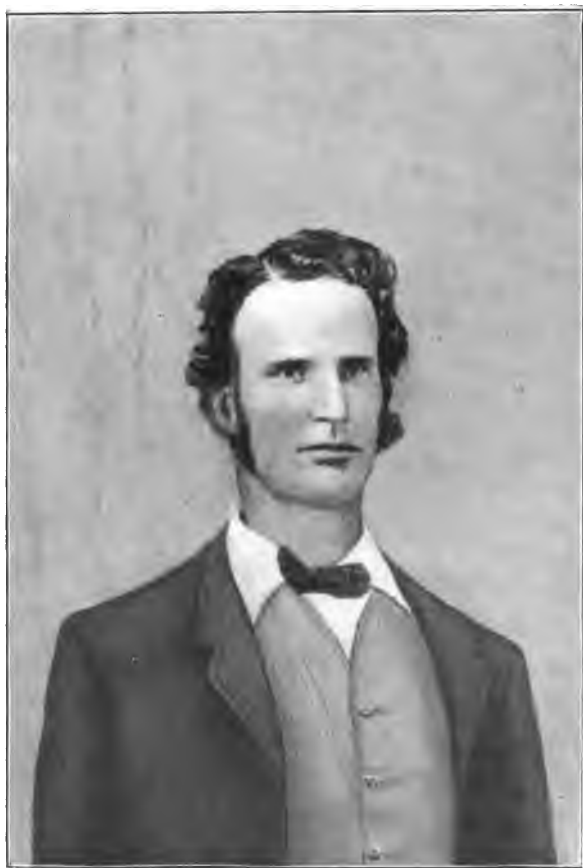


# ADAM LINDSAY GORDON

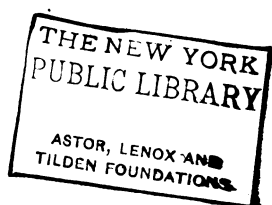
## CHAPTER I

### HIS BOYHOOD

OUR Australian poet, though English by birth and education, was, as the name would tell, of Scottish extraction. The family could trace its pedigree back into the dim centuries, but the fortunes of the poet's branch were laid by a certain Robert Gordon, who, in the reign of Queen Anne, left his native shores and settled in France, as the partner in a wine and spirit business. Many a cask of claret, and many an anker of cognac, did he ship from these ancient quays of Bourdeaux and Boulogne. For he had a business in each of these towns, and when the troubles that arose from war drove him home again after thirty years of business, he landed in Scotland with an ample fortune. This he invested in a landed estate known as the Barony of Esslemont, whereon we may picture him as a courtly old gentleman, bewigged and powdered and more than a little French in manner, living out the peaceful remnant of his days. But he had formed the ambition of founding a landed



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ADAM LINDSAY GORDON AT THE AGE OF THIRTY.  
*From a Daguerrotype.*



family, and so ere his death he entailed the fine estate upon his eldest male heir, little guessing the entanglement so to arise to a descendant of his, a poet in a far-off land then unknown.

All of his sons were capable men, who advanced their fortunes in various ways, not the least of which was the marrying of heiresses. One of them, who, towards the end of last century, had gone to England to push his fortune, in this latter way acquired the ample estate of Greenhill, near Worcester, whereon he prospered, and educated a numerous family of boys, of whom one became a dignitary of the Church, one attained distinction in the navy, and two obtained the rank of captains in the army.

Of these two last, one was Adam Durnford Gordon, the poet's father. It was in the early part of 1815, ere yet the escape of Napoleon was known, that he left as a lad his quiet Worcester home, decked in his ensign's uniform, to join at Portsmouth the ship which was to carry his regiment to the Barbadoes. There is extant a letter, four pages of old-fashioned quarto, a time-stained relic from the sacred treasury of the yearning mother, in which he tells her the brave hopes and ambitions wherewith his heart is swelling as he writes at the great square stern windows of the anchored ship ere she starts away upon her voyage. So he sails out upon the rolling Atlantic, but after that point his fortunes are for a while not to be traced.

How long he stayed in the West Indies—how he came to leave the regular army and take a commission in the Bengal cavalry of the East India

Company—is not discoverable. It is said that he saw much active service, probably in the first Burmese War ; but, at any rate, some years' exposure in jungle and arduous toil before hill fort and barbarous stronghold sent him home an invalid at the end of 1825 to recover his health in England. Probably he had been wounded, for, though still not thirty years of age, he had a pension from the Company.

At home the most notable feature of his convalescence was that he fell in love with his cousin, Miss Harriet Elizabeth Gordon, to whom in due course he was married. She had a fortune of £20,000 settled upon herself, and invested in three and a quarter per cent. consols, a circumstance which afterwards played an important part in the poet's history. This income and the captain's pension made it unnecessary for him to risk his enfeebled constitution by a return to active military service. They led a life of English rural ease, till, after the birth of two girls, Mrs. Gordon showed signs of mental aberration ; melancholia of a mild religious form had marked her its victim, and both for her sake and his own the doctors advised a change of climate. Whence it came to pass that somewhere about 1830 the family removed to the Azore Islands, renting a roomy and quaintly-furnished house amid the vineyards of Fayal. Here in 1833 was born their only son, to whom was given the name of Adam Lindsay.

A most lovely spot this must have been wherein to pass a childhood. From the sunny windows of the house, set upon a hill, could be seen the whole of the island—for nowhere is it six miles long—a mass

of verdure, whose undulating vineyards were marked with clumps of darker green, where myrtles and orange trees half hid and half revealed the snowy walls of Spanish cottages. All the lanes and roads of the island are described in the captain's letters as being bosomed deep in luxurious roses. Here and there a jutting crag of naked rock fronted its ruddy face to the sun, which set among the grey haze that showed where sister-islets were lifting up their cliffs and their hill-tops far away on the Western Atlantic. In one of his letters Captain Gordon bursts forth :— "The distant hills and valleys seem to me like the blessed regions of holiness, never blighted by frosts nor withered by the too fervid sunbeam, but fragrant with verdant pasture and everlasting roses." In the evening, when, from the nunnery in the little white-washed village down below, the Angelus rose amid the still and perfumed breath of the tropic, the twilight shades must have very gently gathered round the bright little boy, as he was sung to sleep in an airy nursery whose windows overlooked the broken cliffs and the splash of ocean.

In the third year his father's letters give this passing glimpse of him :—"A sweet little fellow he is : indeed, I think him almost too pretty. Very slight and upright, carrying his little curly head well back, and almost swaggering along. He talks with a sweet, full, laughing voice, and a face dimpled and bright as the morning. He is seen here, perhaps, to too great an advantage, in very light clothing, scampering amid the large and airy play-rooms. We have just finished the joyous vintage, after a summer

of extraordinary beauty, and the delicious baskets of grapes have rained upon us for these two months."

Well was it, perhaps, for that father, a man of singular gentleness, reserved in manner, yet warm,— fervently warm at heart, that, in the placid happiness of his little Eden, he could in no way foresee how the bright dawn of the three young lives around him was to move slowly on into an ever-gathering gloom. There are some lives which rise amid difficulties, bitternesses, and sorrows, but work on from success to success, steadily passing into the more cheerful day, till they end at last in a quiet sunset. But those of the boy Lindsay, as he was always called, and of his two dark-skinned but merry-faced little sisters, rising in the sunshine of ample means, a lovely home, and a joyous temper, were doomed to be tainted more and more as the years advanced with the gloomy weakness which they inherited from their mother. She, poor lady, after benefiting for a year or two from change of scene, began to despond again, and the family removed to Madeira, where, however, another lovely home failed to cheer her, and as the girls were reaching an age when educational wants began to be felt, they all returned about the year 1840 to the vicinity of their friends in the west of England.

The fame of Cheltenham as a health resort sent them thither, and they formed a home in the pleasant little town, Lindsay, then seven years old, enjoying, for the first time, the delights of boyish companionship, with fishing excursions down by the little Chelt, or longer rambles among the Gloucester-

shire orchards, or by the Severn banks, five miles away.

The boy at eight years of age was entered in 1841 as a day boy in the college which had just been newly founded in Cheltenham. From the first he was essentially a shy lad, tall and slim, though muscular. But withal he was subject to outbursts of reckless energy; whether the fit were one of courage or generosity, of assistance or defiance, he seems, so far as we can now judge from scattered and obscure reminiscences of fellow-pupils, to have been one who never did anything by halves, if only his somewhat eccentric mind could be awakened to any impulse. He was not a studious lad. The college records teem with the honours and prizes won by his cousins. They are utterly silent as to any academic glories won by Lindsay.

Nevertheless he was by no means without his ambitions, but they ran mostly in the direction of sport. He became a devoted student of the art of boxing, and in sparring with the gloves; while his short sight was a disadvantage, he had much to gain from his height and length of arm. In addition to these harmless bits of exercise, he was very frequently mixed up with little trips to secluded corners of the fields, where two little heaps of garments and a small ring of aiders and abettors gave suggestion of the bruising work that went on within.

In 1844 the directors of Cheltenham College decided to add to that great institution a department which should prepare lads for the Indian service, and Captain Gordon was asked to undertake



the teaching of Hindustani. As he was by taste a student of linguistics, this was very much to his inclination, and the remaining years of his life were pleasantly diversified by this morning task. The rest of his day he spent mostly in his large and excellent library, the evening in a game of cards with a few of his elderly neighbours. He was a tall, delicate man, simple in his tastes, a little stern in his notions of discipline, dignified, courteous, and kindly, but too distant and shy in temperament to be easily known. The poet says of him in 'Ye Wearie Wayfarer' :

"I remember some words that my father said  
When I was an urchin vain :—  
God rest his soul, in his narrow bed  
These ten long years he hath lain.  
When I think one drop of the blood he bore  
This faint heart surely must hold,  
It may be my fancy and nothing more,  
But the faint heart seemeth bold."

Being himself the soul of honour, he trusted implicitly to the lad's sense of honour, and truly no one ever had a nobler spirit than Adam Lindsay Gordon ; but a sense of honour is not all that is necessary for the choice of safe companions, and the little lad's life, which was all day long out of doors, drifted too much into the society of older boys, who, though he thought them the finest of manly fellows, were scarcely the guides for guileless youth ; and his mother had now but little control over him. She shut herself up in her room for days, bewailing the unutterable wickedness of which in her aberration

she accused herself, and writing out by the score long rambling prayers, one of the forms assumed by her religious mania. Sometimes she fasted for penance so severely that food had to be forced upon her to preserve her life.

With so little home supervision, the boy's lessons were neglected, and at the age of fifteen he was blossoming into an ardent little sportsman, with more delight in his pony than in aught else. Under the riding-master at Cheltenham, George Reeves, he learnt the joys of gallop and leap—

“The stimulant which the horseman feels  
When he gallops fast and straight,”

as he himself in later years expressed it. A mile or two south of Cheltenham there rise the grassy shoulders of the Cotswold Hills, and here he loved to join the hunt over the breezy uplands and across the hollows, and away to where the seven sources of the Thames trickle through their beechen forests. As he sings in his verses, ‘By Flood and Field’:

“I remember the lowering wintry morn,  
And the mist on the Cotswold Hills,  
Where I once heard the blast of the huntsman's horn,  
Not far from the seven rills.  
Jack Esdale was there, and Hugh St. Clair,  
Bob Chapman and Andrew Kerr;  
And big George Griffiths on Devil-may-care,  
And—black Tom Olliver.”

They were a somewhat dangerous crew, the comrades thus recalled. Tom Olliver was a steeple-

chase jockey, one of the best in the district, who was then engaged in training horses at a village two miles out of Cheltenham; and the others, so far as we know, were all of a sort to lead a lad into rather a wild life. One of the dangers of these times is described at the close of the same verses, for he had many a fall, and was well known for the moody sort of recklessness which he displayed.

“I remember but little more  
Save a bird's-eye gleam of the dashing stream,  
A jarring thud on the wall,  
A shock and the blank of a nightmare's dream;  
I was down with a stunning fall.”

The time came when he must leave school, and the army was his choice. One of his uncles was a colonel of artillery, one a major, and one a post-captain in the navy. The family was one of those that pride themselves on serving their Queen, and Lindsay was packed away to Woolwich to learn the scientific part of the military profession. He had made no success at school. He carried with him the same want of application when he went to Woolwich. He neither studied mathematics nor devoted himself to the mysteries of fortification; but instead he spent his precious hours in a branch of arts militant not recognized in the place. During the latter part of his school life he had been taking lessons from Jem Edwards, the West of England boxer; now he had a chance of studying at the hands of Tom Sayers, afterwards the pugilist hero of England. Yet all this was with a certain boldly generous spirit, such as

may entitle him to a measure of admiration. Then, as always, he glorified the manliness of a man, making it lean a little too much perhaps to the physical side, but not forgetful of the mental and moral qualities that go to the making of true nobility. His delight could be strong in the sight of

“Men for the most part rough and rude,  
Dull and illiterate,  
If they nursed no quarrel, and cherished no feud,  
And were strangers to spite and hate.  
If in kindly spirit they took their stand,  
That brothers and sons might learn  
How a man should uphold the sports of his land,  
And strike his best with a strong right hand,  
And take his strokes in return.”

Various escapades brought him into collision with the authorities, and his father withdrew him. He was too wild for the army, but might succeed in the Church. To Oxford, therefore, he was sent, and entered at Merton College. Study, however, still obtained small share of his attention. He was a constant visitor at the country race meetings for fifty miles around, and, though it scandalized his uncles and cousins, he sometimes himself rode a steeplechase. Meantime his favourite sister Ada had died; and his mother's case was growing hopeless. In her religious craze she had formed quite an aversion for the reckless youth; and his father's quick temper was being sorely tried.

It is said that on one occasion, when a friend of Lindsay's at college was likely to reap bitter fruit from a piece of folly, he undertook to get from his

father at Cheltenham the sum that was necessary to prevent an exposure. But after journeying down to the west he found that his father had gone away for a few days, while he knew that it was hopeless to apply to his mother. He believed that his father would readily have granted the ten or twelve pounds needful, and the case was desperate. He took therefore from his father's library a considerable number of volumes and sold them to raise the money. Few fathers would tolerate such a liberty, and very few indeed of those whose tastes run strongly in the way of books. The tale may be untrue, as three-fourths of those related by imaginative acquaintances of the poet's can be proved to be; but it chimes in with the general reputation the lad had earned for himself in those days. He was held to be a wild, reckless youth, eccentric, unsteady, yet eminently generous and high-spirited, and with a lofty ideal of his own that led him ever with an unpredictable and meteoric glow.

I have seen letters of his, written after he landed in Australia, which speak with a sort of half-regretful remorse of sad follies in his eighteenth and nineteenth years. In the latter year especially he had to mourn excesses in the matter of wine, which filled him with disgust at his own waywardness. Occasionally in these letters he joins in the foolish patter of thoughtless youth about the gloriousness of a merry spree, and boasts of things in which men sometimes take a silly pride; but in general the tone of his retrospect is juster, and he expresses a mortification, none the less keen because it is

unavailing, that he spent so much of a critical time in his life in follies that dragged him into the margin of vices.

For not only had he a certain degree of student intemperance to regret, but there is reason to believe, from the allusions of his own letters, that he became slightly entangled with girls of a more or less hopeless reputation. His ideal in regard to women was so lofty in after life, and his general bearing in regard to them so deferential and chivalrous, that we may justly surmise his follies in this way to have gone to no great length. Indeed, while he makes no sort of effort to palliate his life, there is quite enough in his letters to show that his worst fault was a weak compliance for a brief time with the habits of a fast set, from which his better nature recoiled.

To the rescue, if ever he had been seriously endangered, there came the corrective of an ardent attachment. Like the wild young sportsman he was, he knew all the country far and near round Cheltenham; knew the farmers, and was a favourite with their daughters. He and some of his companions delighted to frequent the rural balls, and to dance and flirt in furious fashion with the rosy-cheeked belles of the village.

But one of these, the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, made a far deeper impression. There is a touch of autobiography introduced into the poem he wrote long afterwards under the title of 'No Name':

"You in your beauty above me bent  
In the pause of a wild West-country ball,—  
Spoke to me,—touched me without intent,  
Made me your servant once for all.

Light laughter rippled your rose-red lip,  
And you swept my cheek with a shining curl  
That strayed from your shoulder's snowy tip.—  
Now I pray that your sleep is a sound one, girl."

The last line is spoken in a dramatic quality, for the lady survived him, and is yet at a ripe old age alive. But in all probability the previous portion relates the manner of his captivation, and there is no doubt that his passion, if reckless, was ardent.

His people at home soon had an inkling of the reason why at every holiday his rides turned off on the road to that particular farm. His mother took mortal offence at the prospect. It is a way with the sillier sort of mothers to feel a grudge against the girl who captivates, or as they would call it entrap, an only son. There was nothing in the young lady herself to be the cause of any dismay. She was well educated, and without reproach, but as a farmer's daughter she mingled in a set not comparable with the military officers, the college teachers, the clergy, and invalid old dowagers who formed the only people worth knowing around Cheltenham.

Mrs. Gordon, therefore, and through her Captain Gordon also, interfered in the progress of the love affair, and would have broken it off. But the lad Lindsay, now nineteen, was headstrong and resolute. To his temperament, opposition at home would be only like the draught of cool air that bids the spark

fly into flame. He therefore still made his various excuses for riding out in that way, and spent many an hour in the farm-house, talking with the farmer, in the hopes of winning a few words from the daughter, who well knew his thought and felt the flattery of a handsome young man's passionate admiration.

But there was a more serious obstacle than his mother's prejudices. Lindsay Gordon had now gathered a reputation for fastness, and the worthy old farmer had reasons for objecting more cogent than those of the stately Mrs. Gordon. A song of Gordon's, written apparently at this period, gives small suggestion of the ideal husband.

"Here's a health to every sportsman, be he stableman or lord,  
If his heart be true, I care not what his pocket may afford ;  
And may he ever pleasantly each gallant sport pursue,  
If he takes his liquor fairly, and his fences fairly too.

He cares not for the bubbles of Fortune's fickle tide,  
Who like Bendigo can battle, or like Olliver can ride ;  
He laughs at those who caution, at those who chide he'll  
frown,

As he clears a five-foot paling, or he knocks a peeler down.

The dull, cold world may blame us, boys, but what care we  
the while

If coral lips will cheer us, and bright eyes on us smile ?  
For beauty's fond caresses can most tenderly repay  
The weariness and troubles of many an anxious day."

Poets are in general not to be taken too literally, but Gordon always wrote from the heart, and meant all he said ; so that a careful father might be very wise if he gave small encouragement to a suitor who lived well up to his rollicking sentiments.



The young lady, had she given way, might no doubt easily have fallen in love with the prepossessing youth in spite of his escapades. But there were many considerations to steady her. By marrying him she would be forcing her way into a family unwilling to accept her, and into a society that was painfully exclusive. Then again, her own people warned her against the young man himself, and no doubt she could see in his character enough that was rash and unstable to make it doubtful whether he would ever be able to earn a living for himself, much less provide a reasonable home for a wife. Love laughs at bounds, no doubt, and the girl whose affections have been fairly won is most worthy of our admiration when she will brave all, and help the man of her choice to fight his battles with the world and its temptations.

But where no love as yet is, but only a dawning inclination, a girl is amply justified in asking herself whether it would be wise to let her affections gather round a reckless young fellow, utterly regardless of his college work, devoted to every race-meeting over the whole country, with a reputation for eccentricity and unsteadiness, and with antagonistic relatives. She gave him diminished encouragement, yet still he haunted the farm-house, till at last an incident brought all his young life to a climax.

He had been enjoying himself a good deal in the rapturous delights of riding steeplechases. He was very light, though tall and muscular, and without any mixture of either fear or caution. Hence he had many advantages for the joys of amateur jockey-

ship. But he was so utterly reckless in his riding that no one would entrust to his care a really valuable animal, and the lad had to reckon himself lucky if he secured any mount at all. In general he had some lanky, weedy-legged creature to ride whose prospects of success were from the first of the haziest description.

He had a chance of doing something better. Black Tom Olliver, down at Prestbury, was training a big steeplechaser, whose owner was anxious to sell him. Gordon and an equally impecunious young friend resolved to purchase him on the time-payment system, and having put down their little all, proceeded thereafter to make their periodic payments.

Now the time approached for the Worcester races, whereat was to be a grand steeplechase, and the lads entered their yet unpaid-for horse to compete. The owner, however, having visions of reckless riding, and a broken-necked horse on his hands, declined to accept the assurances of the youngsters that in any case the animal would be paid for. Once dead, he thought, steeplechasers are soon forgotten, and a pair of penniless youths, both minors, would be poor security. So he refused to let the horse be ridden unless the balance was paid. This it was beyond the means of the youths to do, so they had to face the disgusting prospect of seeing a race they thought the horse sure to win pass by without so much as a gallop for it.

Flesh and blood of the Gordon type were hopelessly incapable of standing it. The night before the race, he got the horse surreptitiously out of the

stable, and appeared with it in the line that fronted the starter's flag. It is said, but I can find no record of it, that Gordon here won his first victory in steeplechasing. His triumph was of short duration, for he learnt that a warrant was out for his arrest, and that a sheriff was anxiously inquiring after him up and down the course.

He found his way home safely enough, but his father was compelled to pay a considerable sum to keep the young scapegrace from appearing in court. There was a general consensus among all the Gordon connection that this wayward youth would come to no good, and would be a disgrace to the family. His mother, who had prayed both for him and at him for a long time, was bitterly hostile to him, and expressed an absolute horror of his wicked ways; his father was easily worked round to the belief that the lad would do better to quit all his fast connections, and start afresh in a new country.

So the proposition was made to Gordon that he should go off to Australia. It was the early part of the year 1853. The stories of Ballarat and Mount Alexander were still fresh and stirring romances in England; the prospect was not without its glamour to one so impressionable and so fond of adventure as the youthful Lindsay Gordon. He had no objection save one, and that was his ardent fancy for the farmer's daughter.

His mind was soon made up. He would go to the farm, make his proposal, and if accepted, he would defy his people, stay in England, and carve

out his own career. If rejected, why then there was no tie of any consequence to keep him at home.

The details of this stormy time are all to be found most fully narrated in documents now in possession of Mr. J. Howlett Ross. They introduce the names of people now living, who naturally dislike that all the long dead circumstances of a brief but painful period should be revived; and others are mentioned whose friends think it wise to let the dust of some few years more gather over the past ere it should be stirred by literary curiosity. Eventually Mr. Ross will have an interesting tale to tell. For the present, we must merely picture to ourselves an ardent youth, generous and honourable, but reckless and misguided, dashing out on his horse through the sweet country roads in the later May time, while the hedges were fast losing all their scented vestments. We can see him in the farmhouse parlour, giving voice to his affection in a desperate fervour, while the maiden, firm in her purpose, gives a steadfast refusal, not without bitter tears, however, when she knows that expatriation of the handsome youth is to be the consequence of her cautious self-control.

It was a painful parting, and Gordon never saw her more. She married some years later an excellent husband, who, strange to say, earned a local reputation as a poet, but more still as a man of scientific bent. She led a life of placid happiness, yet now, as a widow advanced in years, retains a vivid memory of the daring and chivalrous youth

who, nearly half a century ago, loved her with a heart so unreserved.

If the poet is in any way our hero, we are apt enough to feel in some degree hostile to the lady who rejected him, and altered all his life. But we have to remember too what our criticism is of the wilful girl who persists in marrying, in spite of every warning, a man who, as all her friends assure her, will bring her to want and unhappiness.

So the first tempestuous chapter was closed in the chequered life of Adam Lindsay Gordon. The barque *Julia*, of 510 tons, was lying down in the docks at London. His passage was taken in it, and all preparations made for his outfit. His father was perhaps the strongest tie that bound him to England. He seems to have stood too badly in the narrow and pietistic mind of his melancholic mother to regret her greatly. Of his two sisters, one had died a year or two before, and the other had wilfully engaged herself to a young Italian named Ratti, whom the lad disliked, and all the family detested. So Ignaz Gordon, the dark-eyed beauty born in Madeira, would soon be taken off to Nice by a youth for whom Lindsay had no liking, and, with the one exception of his father, there was nothing to make him wish to stay in England.

He had taken to writing verses for the last year or two, most of them doggerel connected with the scrapes of college or of racing friends. Those I have seen would in general be little worth the printing, though beyond a doubt they have a boldness of touch in places that indicates a fresh and vigorous mind.

Before he sailed he seems to have made a pilgrimage to his sister's grave, and a day or so later wrote to his other sister Ignez those lines that are so well known :

“ Across the trackless seas I go,  
No matter when or where,  
And few my future lot will know,  
And fewer still will care.  
My hopes are gone, my time is spent,  
I little heed their loss,  
And if I cannot feel content  
I cannot feel remorse.

My parents bid me cross the flood,  
My kindred frown at me ;  
They say I have belied my blood  
And stained my pedigree.  
But I must turn from those who chide,  
And laugh at those who frown ;  
I cannot quench my stubborn pride,  
Nor keep my spirits down.

I loved a girl not long ago,  
And, till my suit was told,  
I thought her breast as fair as snow,—  
'Twas very near as cold.  
And yet I spoke, with feelings more  
Of recklessness than pain,  
Those words I never spoke before,  
Nor ever shall again.

Her cheek grew pale, in her dark eye  
I saw the tear-drop shine ;  
Her red lips faltered in reply,  
And then were pressed to mine.  
A quick pulsation of the heart,  
A flutter of the breath,  
A smothered sob—and thus we part,  
To meet no more till death.

With adverse fate we best can cope  
When all we prize has fled,  
And where there's little left to hope  
There's little left to dread.  
Oh, time glides ever quickly by,  
Destroying all that's dear :  
On earth there's little worth a sigh,  
And nothing worth a tear.

There is a spot not far away,  
Where my young sister sleeps,  
Who seems alive but yesterday,  
So fresh her memory keeps ;  
For we have played in childhood there  
Beneath the hawthorn bough,  
And bent our knees in childish prayer  
I cannot utter now.

Of late so reckless and so wild,  
That spot recalls to me  
That I was once a laughing child  
As innocent as she.  
And there, while August's wild-flowers wave,  
I wandered all alone,  
Strewed blossoms on her little grave,  
And knelt beside the stone.

I seem to have a load to bear,  
A heavy, choking grief ;  
Could I have forced a single tear  
I might have felt relief.  
Sister, farewell,—farewell once more  
To every youthful tie !  
Friends, parents, kinsmen, native shore,  
To each and all good-bye."

And so the lad and his father took train for London, and when the heart-broken, but strict-of-discipline old father warmly pressed his hand as they parted on the gangway, that grip was to be to

Lindsay the last symbol of the old time and all its early hopes. The youth was destined never again to see either relative or friend of his boyhood. The gulf was to be profound and absolute.

The *Julia* as she was tugged out of St. Catherine's Docks bore with her at least one heart that harboured many a resentment, and a bitter resolution that the friends who could so utterly cast him off, should at least never be again reminded that they were disgraced by his existence. No doubt as the captain threaded his way back through the mean streets and the squalid shops, he brooded with full heart on the contrast between the bright little baby boy of the Azores, and the reckless youth of sullied reputation now on his way to Adelaide.



## CHAPTER II

### FIRST AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCES

It was on August 7, 1853, that the barque *Julia* dropped down the Thames on her outward way. Upon her narrow poop she carried a tall spare youth, very pensive, and very unsocial. He soon grew tired even of the presence of his fellow-passengers, and loved to wander forward to the fore-castle, or out upon the plunging bowsprit, where he would lie for hours watching the panorama of cliff and grassy downs, the peeping steeple, and the straggling village. So the vessel lay over to a good breeze, while her decks were wet, and the spray flew up from the crash of bow and billow. We may easily fancy him as he watched the shores he was nevermore to see, musing on the friends he should never hear of again—that father, doomed to die in three years more; that mother, destined to share the grave two years later; that sister, of whose existence he should never again have word or token.

None but himself to blame, no doubt, and he felt it so. He realized altogether the un wisdom of his own unyielding temper, but so he was born, and so he felt himself bound to be till the end of the story.

"I've something of the bull-dog in my breed,  
The spaniel is developed somewhat less :  
While life is in me, I can fight and bleed,  
But never the chastising hand caress.  
You say the stroke was well intended. True.  
You mention 'It was meant to do me good.'  
That may be. 'You deserve it.' Granted too.  
'Then take it kindly.' No, I never could."

So while his heart was brooding over vain regrets,  
it was stiff in its rebellious pride. His taste for  
rhyming gave some outlet to his passionate feeling  
in these long hours of solitary bitterness :

"Let those who will their failings mask,  
To mine I frankly own ;  
But for them pardon I will ask  
Of none, save Heaven alone.  
Still if to error I incline,  
Truth whispers comfort strong,  
That never reckless act of mine  
E'er worked a comrade wrong.

My mother is a stately dame,  
Who oft would chide at me ;  
She saith my riot bringeth shame,  
And stains my pedigree.  
I'd reck not what my friends might know,  
Or what the world might say,  
Did I but think some tears would flow  
When I am far away.

But they are now so few indeed  
(Not more than three in all)  
Who e'er will think of me or heed  
What fate may me befall.  
Adieu, my mother ! If no more  
Thy son's face thou mayst see,  
At least those many cares are o'er  
So often caused by me."

As the *Julia* advanced out into the Atlantic, under the sunny skies that had witnessed his birth and childhood, he seemed to waken to a more general interest in life, and was less uncommunicative among his fellow-passengers. Not that he became even moderately social, for he never in all his life was much inclined for company, nor did he ever shine in conversation. But he made a few friends in a passing way among the occupants of the saloon. In a lady's album he wrote about the end of September these verses descriptive of his feelings, and the manner in which he spent his time on board :

“The ocean heaves around us still  
With long and measured swell ;  
The autumn gales our canvas fill,  
Our ship rides smooth and well ;  
The broad Atlantic's bed of foam  
Still breaks against our prow ;  
I shed no tears at quitting home,  
Nor will I shed them now.

Against the bulwarks on the poop  
I lean and watch the sun  
Behind the red horizon stoop—  
His race is nearly run ;  
While from my pipe the vapours curl  
Towards the evening sky,  
And 'neath my feet the billows whirl  
In dull monotony.”

Then his mind wanders away back to the old  
Cheltenham home :

“How vivid Recollection's hand  
Recalls the scene once more !

I see the same tall poplars stand  
Beside the garden door ;  
I see the bird-cage hanging still ;  
And where my sister set  
The flowers in the window-sill—  
Can they be living yet ?

Let woman's nature cherish grief ;  
I rarely heave a sigh,  
Before emotion takes relief  
In listless apathy.  
Then let our barque the ocean roam,  
Our keel the billows plough ;  
I shed no tears at quitting home,  
Nor will I shed them now."

The *Julia*, though but a small vessel, made by no means a bad passage, and was berthed in Port Adelaide on November 14, 1853. Gordon had with him several letters of introduction from his uncles and cousins to people of influence in the Colony ; one of them was to Sir Henry Young, the Governor, but he seems to have presented none of them. That defiant, resolute, and somewhat resentful spirit which speaks out in his verses must have bidden him discard all help from those who thought him a disgrace. He was to show that he could make his own career in a new land un beholden to any of his proud kindred.

Accordingly he had patrolled the unpaved streets of Adelaide only three days when he lodged an application to be admitted into the mounted police force of South Australia. Nor had he long to wait for a reply. South Australia had in 1852 suffered greatly from the exodus of people to the gold-fields

of Victoria. Her income had been so much reduced that she was compelled to retrenchment, and among other economies she had dismissed thirty of her mounted troopers. Yet time had brought back her population and revived her revenue. It was just about this time that the Government had come to the resolution of restoring in part at least the crippled force. Thus on the ninth day after Gordon's landing he was in the uniform of the mounted police, with his legs astride of a good horse, finding his way to the south-eastern district of the Colony, where he was to be initiated into his new duties. He seems to have been absolved from the usual training in barracks, probably because of his skill as a rider, and the urgent need of constables in some parts of the Colony.

It is generally believed that Gordon rode in the armed gold escort between Mount Alexander and Adelaide, and I have met with those who professed to give circumstantial accounts of his adventures in that service. But all this is woven out of imagination. The gold escort was discontinued about a month after Gordon landed in Australia, and his name occurs in none of the official records. He seems almost at once to have gone to take charge of the Mount Gambier station. There he dwelt in a quiet little cottage of his own, riding abroad over the long distances, a tall but beardless youth, stooping a good deal by reason of defective sight, but seen at a glance to be a practised horseman. He was regarded as being somewhat unsocial, and yet none who addressed him failed to receive

a cheerful courtesy, even though encouraged to no intimacy.

He remained in the police force two years all but a week, resigning his position on November 8, 1855. The service had its congenial elements. Those long and solitary rides were altogether to his taste, but though red-tape was not unnecessarily thrust on the trooper, there was more of it than Gordon liked. Moreover, there were parts of his duty from which he shrank. On one occasion he had to escort to gaol, a hundred miles away, a woman of the vilest habits and conversation. He was of necessity thrown into her company for three whole days, and as he was a man by nature most fastidious in his respect for womanhood, the task was one of inexpressible disgust.

In later years he used to relate an exciting experience of those days. He had been directed to conduct a lunatic to the nearest asylum, two hundred miles away. The madman was mounted on a young half-broken colt. The trooper, with his pistols and loaded carbine strapped to the saddle, curvetted along on his excellent horse. At night they slept in the open air beneath the handiest tree, Gordon fastening his prisoner's hand to his own with the handcuffs as the surest way of keeping him secure. The lunatic was very restless, and Gordon's long day was followed by a sleepless night. Once or twice, after being wakened for the twentieth time, he uttered some awful threats in order to quieten down his crazy charge, but in the morning the madman had a chance of turning the tables.

Gordon, with thoughtless good-humour, set the man on his own excellent horse, while he himself cantered on in front upon the half-broken beast. But he had forgotten all about the loaded carbine in the saddle, and ere they had gone half-a-mile he had a sudden reminder in the shape of a bullet that whistled past him. Facing round, he became aware of the situation. The two were alone in the wilderness, and though he might have the advantage in sanity, the other had all the arms, and had, besides, the memory of that midnight score to wipe off. It was a trying conjuncture, and it required all Gordon's address and persuasiveness to get out of it.

It was whilst Gordon was in the police force that he saved the life of a poor German, who with his wife and two children was working his way to the Bendigo diggings. The man seems to have gone out to cut a pole for his dray, when he lost himself in the bush. He was away for twelve days in all, before Gordon succeeded in carrying eight miles to Scott's Tatiara station the poor bundle of skin and bones he had after some days of searching discovered. The man was nursed back to life by the brothers Scott.

Gordon's resignation seems to have been more immediately the result of his resentment at some officious exercise of superiority, but he liked the Mount Gambier district and remained in it. At this time there was growing up a trade in horses for the Indian market, and for that and other reasons there was a fair amount of horse-breaking to be done.

Gordon, now two-and-twenty, set up in business as a professional horse-breaker, and remained at it

for seven years. He moved from station to station, spending a week here and a month there, wherever a few colts were ready for training. Being but a horse-breaker, he was rarely asked to join the squatter's family, yet he felt an aversion to the average society of the men's hut. He preferred to camp by himself, to read himself to sleep at his own leisure, and be early astir in the mornings, clad in blue jumper, riding cords, and Wellington boots. But in spite of his cabbage-tree hat and bushman's air, those who knew him in the days of his roughest work assert that he was never untidy in his person; and that underneath his commonplace garb there peeped forth a gentlemanly something which his neighbours not altogether understood, but which was altogether in keeping with an honest pair of dark-grey eyes, and a noble type of resolute features, round which the dark brown hair clustered in short curls.

He had a permanent home to which he could return from his various trips. It was a hut of two rooms about four miles from Mount Gambier, which he shared with William Trainor, the first intimate friend he made. They were both of the same occupation, and when the work was near enough at hand they sallied forth on their several ways in the morning, meeting again to share their tea together after dark. If it were winter they went to bed, smoked and chatted for a while; then Gordon would draw forth his novel, Scott or Dickens, Kingsley or Mayne Reid, but best beloved of all, Whyte-Melville, for whom he had a sort of hero-worship. All readers of Gordon will remember the frequent references



to the sporting novelist, and will recall those dedicatory lines which are amongst the best he ever wrote.

Thus the long evenings were spent in the far lands of vivid romance, with page out-turned to catch the yellow light of the pannikin lamp, a home-made floating wick in the midst of a tin of mutton fat, mingling its smoke with the curling wreaths of the often-filled black pipe. At this period of his life his early fancy for rhyme and rhythm seems to have died out. There is no record that he wrote verses, and it seems certain that for years he read very little; the only book of verse he possessed was Macaulay's 'Lays.' He read and re-read the stirring ballads till he held the whole tenaciously by heart, but of other poetry he had none.

It was a perfect godsend, therefore, when he made acquaintance with the good priest Julian Tenison Woods, whose long rides through the same province carried him over the same ground. Having once met, the two men found something mutually attractive. However negligent Gordon had been in his college days, he had a memory which retained all that chanced to strike him, and in their very first conversation, when the priest referred to Homer, he found that his companion could repeat more than one animated passage in the original. Drawing him out a little, he warmed up the feelings of this lanky bushman, who recited with equal fervour scenes from Ovid and others from Virgil. Slyly trying what he could do in the way of French, Father Woods set him upon quoting what he knew, and he recited

broken pieces of Racine and Corneille with much freedom, though with an accent unknown in Paris.

The priest had a fairly good library, and volunteered the loan of books, Gordon gladly accepting the offer. He lent him a pocket Horace, which the young man carried for months in his jumper breast, till he knew by heart most of the odes, and the whole of the 'Art of Poetry.' A few of the modern English poets, including some of Browning's works, were thus lent and many a time perused. Gordon already was well versed in Byron, who had been the model of all his early efforts. He was also fairly familiar with many of the poets of last century.

Tenison Woods gives the following description of one of their rides and talks together:

"One day when riding through the bush with Gordon, I pulled up my horse to gather a plant which I noticed by the wayside. We were then in the Tatiara country, not far from Border Town. Gordon watched me with much interest, and told me how sorry he felt that his shortness of sight had prevented him from cultivating the power of observation. He told me that without such a power the greatest poets would be helpless. He then gave a wonderful proof of his extraordinary memory by quoting long passages from various poets wherein the beauties of nature were described. I noted at the time that his selection included many graceful quotations from Thomson's 'Seasons.'

"He had spoken of having often envied me my enjoyment of natural history. I asked him, did he really think he had occasion to envy any one, seeing

the share of natural gifts he himself possessed? He said that he really felt far from contented. He was often subject to a restless sort of discontent, which at times almost impelled him to the idea of putting an end to the weariness of life. This, he explained, was a sort of melancholy to which much of the finest poetry owed its existence. He quoted Byron and other names that I now forget in support of his theory, and then added, that the study of nature was just the thing which was calculated to correct this morbid feeling.

"This conversation made a deep impression on me, for I connected it with those sad and moody fits which grew upon him more and more. He was very silent and thoughtful in these times, and often failed to hear half of what was said to him."

Trainor also bears testimony to his remarkable powers of memory at this time. He says, "Gordon was a great reader, and amongst other things was fond of a good story. He would often read a book through without putting it out of his hands. On one occasion he suggested that I ought to read some of these books. I replied that it was useless, for I should forget all that was in them immediately afterwards, as he no doubt did himself. Then he told me it was not so. He rarely forgot any story he had once read. He asked me to open one of the books on the table and read him a line or two anywhere. This I did, and he went on to the end of the page almost word for word as it was printed. I tried him in different parts of the book, always with the same result."

Trainor, who lived with him in close intimacy for eight or ten years, says that he instinctively felt the innate superiority of the man. "There was something," he says, "so generous and noble about him, he was so upright and conscientious amid all the whims of his most peculiar nature, that I felt him to be of a stamp quite superior to the men around him, and the closer our acquaintance grew, the deeper became my feelings of respect and admiration."

Trainor thinks that at about this time Gordon's fancy for the Muse must have revived; for now he could be seen, by the light of the "pannikin lamp," setting down on scraps of paper the fruits of the long day's ride. He would take musing-fits, when it was quite useless to try to draw him into conversation, but when they were over he would be seen in secretive fashion jotting down lines and verses. The Sundays he often spent upon the neighbouring coast. Many of his verses recall the tranquil hours that glided dreamily past near the cliffs of Cape Northumberland:

"A grim grey coast and a seaboard ghastly,  
And shores trod seldom by feet of men,—  
Where the battered hull and the broken mast lie,  
They have lain embedded these long years ten.  
Only the crag and the cliff to nor'ward,  
And the rocks receding, and reefs flung forward,  
And waifs wrecked seaward and wasted shoreward,  
On shallows sheeted with flaming foam."

But there were joys of those days much more exciting and dangerous. His interest was still keen

in horse-racing, and at every meeting, whether on the South Australian or on the Victorian side of the border, he generally contrived to be present. If he had a horse in hand of any use as a jumper he liked to enter it and ride it himself at these meetings. Indeed, his daring and skill began to give him a certain local fame among those of horsey tastes. A roan horse he used then to ride became somewhat known in the district. Gordon, however, suffered some jars in being refused admission to the country races on the footing of a gentleman, and once when he won a ladies' purse race, the prize was awarded to another, on the snobbish grounds that the ladies had offered their prize to be contested for only by "gentlemen." So was Shakespeare in his time no "gentleman," but only a play-actor; the world no doubt will surely ripen to the time when, as we hope, the man will cease to be judged by his coat or his calling.

The legend runs, that to his riding Gordon owed his wife. The sweetheart he had wooed in England was, as he had long known, by this time married and settled. Gordon had seen of late years very little of female society. That he was a favourite among the girls when he chose to seek their conversation, we know from the testimony of more than one now elderly matron, who then was in her teens in the Gambier Town district. It is said that there in 1860 he was engaged in a desperate sort of flirtation, but Gordon was then playing the Byronic *rôle* of one grown hopeless by reason of "feeling's dull decay."

In September 1862 he was breaking in a number of horses for Mr. Edward Stockdale, at the Lake Hawdon station, and seems to have stayed at a forlorn little inn of the place called Robe Town on Guichen Bay. The story goes, that as he was riding a fractious colt he had a heavy fall, and several bones were broken. He was for some time confined to bed in the inn, nursed by the landlord's wife, but more particularly by a niece of hers named Maggie Park. She was fairly attractive in appearance, though with small advantages in the way of education, her father being but a poor shepherd on a distant station. But with tender hand and gracious womanly ways she nursed the lonely man into strength, and he, who was still but nine-and-twenty, and romantic in spirit though shy of disposition, yielded to the charm of the situation. So says tradition; but the story is denied, and it is alleged that Gordon was in the district horse-breaking, stayed at the inn, and wooed and won in ordinary fashion the landlady's niece.

Whether his courtship was romantic or not, it is certain that towards the end of October, in 1862, these two rode away to be married at Mount Gambier. It was an eighty miles' ride, but she was an excellent horsewoman, and so they galloped between the lakes to their left, and the long low sand hummocks of the coast to their right, past the surf-tossed sands of Rivoli Bay, and so from these bleaker parts through a land of ever-increasing loveliness to Gambier Town, where they were duly married by the Rev. Mr. Don, the Presbyterian minister of that town.

They settled at first in furnished lodgings at Penola, but ere long he took her to a pretty little cottage, in a wattle-dotted valley near Mount Gambier, only half-a-mile away from his favourite cliffs of Cape Northumberland. The two years spent therein were very happy. He never repented of his choice, and his subsequent letters breathe a mingled admiration and attachment for his wife. She made the little home comfortable, and had a cheery way which was like a tonic to a brooding mind. And she had the tact not to intrude needlessly when a spell of meditative silence fell upon him. For in truth no small share of his mother's malady was gathering over the sunshine of those pleasant days. His verses show how his soul was filled with a melancholy that mused in vain on the mystery of life and the universe; when the futility of its fitful struggles and the enigmas that lie beyond its final bourne oppressed him and wrapped him in a far-off silence. It was in those lonely musings under the wattle-groves round his cottage that he wrote those sad lines:

“Onward, onward, must we travel?

When will come the goal?

Riddle I may not unravel,

Cease to vex my soul.

Distant, yet approaching quickly,

From the shades that lurk,

Like a black pall gathers thickly

Night, when none may work.

Soon our restless occupation

Shall have ceased to be;

Units! in God's vast creation,  
Ciphers! What are we?"

But as the poet ponders, light breaks in upon the problem, and he continues with more of hopefulness :

"Sun and rain and dew from heaven,  
Light and shade and air ;  
Heat and moisture freely given,  
Thorns and thistles share.

Vegetation rank and rotten  
Feels the cheering ray ;  
Not uncared-for, unforgotten,  
We, too, have our day.

Unforgotten !—Though we cumber  
Earth, we work His will ;  
Shall we sleep through night's long slumber,  
Unforgotten still ?"

Then comes a most musical passage, wherein, with a delicious suggestiveness of the scenery around his home, the poet pours the balm of a calm and reasonable courage into souls that, like his own, are filled with the deep melancholy of Hamlet, or who, like Faust, thirst for a knowledge that shall never on earth be known. Read the 'Finis Exoptatus,' knowing who wrote it, and where it was written, it will sound as one of the breeziest and manliest, yet most inly suggestive, of the ballad stanzas in the English language.



## CHAPTER III

### IN PARLIAMENT

Two years of humbly happy life had sped over Gordon and his bride in their quiet little cottage among the golden wattles, when there came in 1864 a letter from England, which at a touch transformed for them the prospect of the future. Their life had been laborious, their earnings small, but their wants had been few; he was of simple tastes, and she had never known luxurious days. It was, therefore, a pleasant shock to both to learn that the sum of £7000 had been lying for the last five years in London, waiting while the trustees of his mother's estate were vainly trying to discover where in the world the exile could be. That money, safely invested in the Colonies, ought to assure them £400 a year for the rest of their lives, a prospect which seemed opulence indeed.

The receipt of this news was to Gordon a most complete surprise. Though it was eleven years since he had left England, he had never had a message from home. His father's death, three years after he had left, removed the only hand that was

likely to correspond with him. His mother's malady had deepened, and she had died five years after his departure. His only sister, Ignez, was living in Italy, deeply ruing an ill-assorted marriage. As to his other relatives, he had been too keenly cut to the quick by the manner in which they had discarded him to be the first to open up a correspondence. They had never written, and beyond the fact that he had landed in Adelaide, nothing was known of him in the old country. For several years inquiries had been made, and the trustees had abandoned them as fruitless. The poet would never have seen his money but for the perseverance of one of them, Sir Alexander Trotter, who continued to make search on his own account. Gordon was completely ignorant that his mother possessed a fortune in her own right. The family income he had always regarded as his father's pension, and he had never been further enlightened. But now, when his mother's £20,000 had been divided into three parts, his share, with accrued interest, amounted to more than £7000.

He might have returned to England, but, on reflection, why should he hope to be happy there? Parents gone, and sister unhappily married in a foreign land, he had no near ties. His wife was a good girl, but quite uncultured. What reception she might receive among his friends he could well imagine. His uncles were all local magnates. Of his cousins one was a rector in the Church, one a colonel, and one a captain of a ship of the line. There was none whose home would not be like a

Greenland chill to the free-and-easy pair from Australia.

Gordon resolved to invest his money in the district and stay where he was. Unluckily for him there never stepped under a gum-tree a man more hopelessly simple in matters of business. He was not without his dislikes and distrusts; but those whom he liked and trusted were too generally only jolly fellows, men whom one picks up on racecourses and billiard-rooms, whose offhand generosity is just as often as not a cloak for calculating selfishness. No small number of these kind friends now rallied round him in his good fortune. All of them were full of zeal to "lay him on to good things." Acting on advice of this sort, he bought a large farm at Penola, and two small stations near Port Macdonnell, about two miles distant from the cottage he had rented. A considerable sum was invested, on the counsel of an interested party, in some Western Australian property. This was a mere speculation; but he thought that from the rents of his other properties he would draw a sufficient income, while various small ventures seemed to promise the yield of a steady return.

People in the district now began to remember that they had always noticed a something gentlemanly in his manner, and his conversation was so superior; and then these nice verses of his in the *Border Watch* were so refined, and that thin quarto volume of verses which he called 'The Feud,' was as yet the most ambitious production of the Mount Gambier press. It had been composed at a time when, to a bazaar held to raise funds for a proposed local hospital, a

set of six engravings had been contributed for sale. These were from Sir Noel Paton's pictures illustrative of the old Scotch ballad of 'The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow.' There would be the engravings on one of the stalls, but without the least word of explanation; and the resources of the district could provide no copy of Scott's 'Minstrelsy of the Borders'; but Gordon, who knew by heart the story of the old ballad, but not its words, undertook to write a new ballad to fit in with the engravings. This was done, and the verses, though in general of little worth, were printed in book form, and had a limited sale at the bazaar. All this wholly altered his position in the general estimation, and he was little surprised when, at the close of 1864, he was asked to suffer himself to be nominated for Parliament in the General Election then at hand.

At this time there was in South Australia a strong political ferment, due to the antagonism felt by a growing party towards the squatters, who held the bulk of the land on grazing leases. This new party wished the land to be thrown open to the farmer, but considered that justice would never be done whilst the squatters held so decided an ascendancy in the Legislature. Yet it could not well be otherwise. Who else had the means to leave their business and live for months of the year hundreds of miles from their homes in Adelaide? To the popular party Gordon seemed a suitable man to be brought forward as one of the candidates for the Victoria electorate in the South-Eastern District. He had means, was a man of education, and was not identified with the

squatting interest. Thus, on January 5, 1865, he received a deputation bearing a requisition that he should stand in the anti-pastoral interest. That same evening he met a number of the electors in the Mount Gambier Assembly Hall, and told them that, while he was very sure they might have found a candidate of worthier qualifications, yet if their choice fell upon him, "they would find him grateful for the honour, and their confidence would not be misplaced."

The contest was one of no little bitterness, for the Blyth Ministry was then tottering to its fall, by reason of growing unpopularity with the democratic party. Gordon's opponent was the Attorney-General of that Ministry, Mr. Randolph Stow, who in a three years' political career had proved himself a champion of vested interests. He was the son of a much-respected clergyman of the Colony, himself a leading barrister, and, ten years later, one of the Judges of the Supreme Court. Blyth and his Cabinet were apprehensive of consequences if their Attorney-General should be defeated. We may with ease imagine the general excitement of that usually quiet district,—the placards, the meetings, the canvassing, and the heated arguments by forge and counter, and over the glass-littered bar.

Gordon gave his first address at Mount Gambier on January 12. It had nothing in the way of eloquence, consisting merely of some chatty, common-sense views on the subjects then of principal interest—the leasing of public lands, assisted immigration, the Education Act, the local roads, the local hospital,

with other topics now dead and dry enough. But the speech had this characteristic conclusion :

“ It has been proposed to bind the candidates neck and heels to do the bidding of the electors. I shall never submit to the process. If I go into Parliament at all, it must be as a free and independent delegate. You may know my sentiments freely, but to myself I reserve the right to modify them. Not to please all the electors on this side of the equator would I bind myself not to do so. I may assure you that I do not readily change my mind, and yet I hold myself free to alter my opinions if reason arises.”

At first it seemed as if his chances were small, but his supporters were resolved that at least the fight should be keen, and, in spite of a jerky manner and want of self-possession, Gordon made a tolerably good impression. On the polling day, March 6, a desperate effort was made by both contending parties to carry the last voter up to the booths, and a very narrow thing it turned out to be. Stow was beaten by three votes, and Gordon was declared the member for the Victoria district. The Blyth Cabinet felt the rejection of the Attorney-General as a last blow, and resigned immediately after the receipt of the news, on March 16, 1865. The change of Ministry caused a delay in the opening of Parliament, and it was not till May 23 that Gordon took his place in the building upon the North Terrace of Adelaide, as a supporter of the Ministry formed by Ayers, Reynolds, Andrews, Strangways, and Dutton.

Meantime he had rented a cottage at Glenelg, a rambling, one-storey building, in Pensanze Street, close to the sea, for which the poet had much affection. It was a weather-board place but roomy, and it stood in about three acres of land, partly occupied by an old orchard, and partly adorned by a number of large and much-contorted gum-trees. He was able to ride or walk into town without difficulty, and regularly started off about nine in the morning for the Parliamentary buildings. The House never met till late in the afternoon, but in Gordon's eyes the good library to which he now had access was a strong attraction. So soon as the room was open he used to settle himself down for a long day's enjoyment. He read the poets with untiring zeal, but made likewise long incursions into the realms of history. A good book of travel or exploration would keep him absorbed with outstretched legs beside a window, while the lengthening spring days went by, in that silent room of which in the forenoons he was the only frequenter.

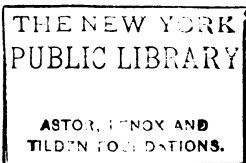
Then it was a pleasant change when the members began to drop in, to take their places in the chamber of the House of Assembly. It was then, as it still is, I believe, the custom in that House for members to have small writing-tables in front of their seats. Each pair of members has such a table with drawers and writing conveniences. Gordon and his colleague for the district, John Riddoch, of Yallum, shared a table in this fashion, and an intimacy thus sprung up which was one of the few lucky features of the poet's life; for in this way he secured a sincere,



RUINS OF A. L. GORDON'S COTTAGE AT GLENELG.  
*From a Photograph by S. Milburn, Glenelg.*

[To face page 168.]





sensible, and warm-hearted friend, whose influence was always favourable throughout the rest of his life.

Up to the prorogation of the House on August 1, Gordon was in his place every day when it sat; but he seems to have found the proceedings very dull, and used to pass away the time of many a dreary debate in which he took no interest by drawing caricatures and squibs. I have seen some of his pen-and-ink sketches. They contain no indication that even with training he would ever have made a mark as an artist; the drawing is too hopeless in its inaccuracy. Yet they have a certain spiciness of their own, which, in their spontaneous and extempore origin, would certainly give them an interest, and Mr. Riddoch relates that it was a common enough question in the House, "Have you seen Gordon's latest?"

As an orator the poet was no success. During the first session he spoke nine times, but more than once it happened that he merely stammered through a few words, lost the thread of his subject, came to an awkward pause, and sat down without finishing his sentence. But on two occasions he felt himself bound by his election pledges to speak up. The first occurred on June 6, about a fortnight after he had taken his seat; he prepared a careful speech, got over his first nervousness, and then, by a sort of reaction, dropped into a free-and-easy style, hand in pocket, nodding in a friendly way to the Speaker as if they two had been brothers. The subject was the renewal of the annual leases whereby the

squatters held their land, and blocked the way for the crowds who yearned to farm it.

"Sir," said Gordon, "last week the Government and this honourable House, after a long discussion and a great deal of speechifying, good, bad, and indifferent, passed a resolution which I had the honour of supporting. Why should they now rescind that resolution? I cannot understand the policy which would one day cast a resolution, and knock it upon the head on the next.

"It looks to me like labour in vain, and calls to mind the legend in the Greek mythology, where Sisyphus is engaged in continually rolling a stone up a hill, an employment in itself probably agreeable enough, but decidedly monotonous. (*Laughter.*) Or like the snail in the school-boy's problem, which goes up the hill two inches by day and falls back one inch every night. But there at least some progress is made. Our motto ought to be 'Advance'—*Nulla vestigia retrorsum*. Shall we emulate that renowned commander, who with twenty thousand men marched up a hill and then marched down again?

"It is a matter of sublime indifference to me personally whether 'Trojan or Tyrian,' whether squatter or anti-squatter gains the ascendancy. They tell me that the squatters must go to the wall. Well, it won't hurt me; that's one comfort. And perhaps—who knows?—in those halcyon days to which the Hon. Treasurer tells us we may now look forward, when the *ad valorem* duties are repealed, when the blessings of free distillation are reaped by the public in general, and by the teetotallers in

particular; when railways and such-like Utopian luxuries flourish in the South-Eastern scrub,—in short, when we enjoy a sort of colonial millennium, who knows, I say, but that some of us, in the fullness of our hearts, may devise some scheme to shorten the period of rebuke and blasphemy to which we have been justly doomed, the condemned class, the *enfants perdus*, the *morituri*, the squatters.

“It is absurd for the squatters to say that the course we are pursuing is not legal. If not so already, we can pass an Act to make it legal. Sir, the Government can confiscate your property or mine, and make that legal by an Act. They may make it law, and if it is law I presume it is justice. But I’ll be hanged if they can make you or me call it justice; at least they wouldn’t make me.”

So did this erratic orator wander on, and at no time was it clear for three minutes together which of the two sides he was supporting. Then he concluded with this classical outburst, about as little suited to the time and audience, as if a man should apostrophize his washer-woman in the words of *Æschylus*.

“I think the squatters have had their day, and they ought to have made hay while the sun was shining. Probably many of them have, but I do not think that that is any reason for oppressing them heedlessly and wantonly. This quarrel is not one of extermination. It has engendered much ill-feeling, has grown wearisome and tedious, and I think it is time to put an end to it. The attacks and reprisals, the mutual recriminations, the bitter invective and

coarse personal abuse that passed on both sides are enough to make a man regret that the march of civilization has swept away the customs of the Middle Ages, and abolished the good old ordeal of battle. (*Laughter.*)

"I have confidence in the moderation of the Government, and think that they will countenance no crusade against the squatters. I was going to say I had faith in the Government, but I am told that too much faith is a bad thing now-a-days, even too much faith in a Ministry.

'Cui neque apud Danaos usquam locus, insuper ipsi  
Dardanidæ infensi poenas cum sanguine poscunt.'"

These paragraphs are specimens taken from a somewhat long and decidedly rambling address. It may easily be imagined that it created more of amusement than of solid impression.

Mr. Glyde, who replied, stated that if Mr. Gordon had not been a young member of the House, he would long ago have been called to order, his speech, though interesting in itself, having been wholly irrelevant. Whilst he was speaking the gas of the Legislative Chamber suddenly went out, and in total darkness Gordon had to listen to a sharp attack on his views and his expressions.

This was Gordon's only serious brush with his fellow-members. As a rule, he was regarded as a somewhat eccentric young man, with whom it was of little use to interfere. The want of tact which was his failing all through life was most conspicuous in Parliament. Wherein could lie the practical

use of quoting long classical passages to squatters and successful business men? Eleven allusions in one speech to mythology, with choice excerpts of two or three lines each from Virgil, only tickled them as a far-off tinkle of the incomprehensible. They laughed and went on with their practical business. He felt that he was making no impression, yet attended conscientiously to his duties, missing only one day of the second session.

He presented four petitions; carried a motion for the erection of a hospital at Mount Gambier; lost by twelve votes to sixteen a motion for building a railway from Narracoorte to Robe, and attended to sundry other matters devolving on a member for the South-Eastern Division. In 1866 he made a somewhat better start, and there were friends who predicted that, with more experience, he would begin to make a mark for himself in the political life of Adelaide. But he himself grew disheartened; relapsed into silence; found the long evenings spent in listening to the eloquence of roads and bridges tedious beyond even poetic expression, and on November 20 of that year he sent in his resignation.

But he was partly moved thereto by pecuniary involvements. Not a single investment had turned out well. He had drawn five or six hundred a year as income during the first two years; then bad seasons came, and he had to face the loss of most of his capital. But he had also his own extravagance in some measure to blame; for at the time when he considered his income assured he had not been able to withstand the old fascination of the racehorse.

He had spent his first parliamentary recess, which extended from August 1 to September 29, of the year 1865, in training, or at least in putting the finishing touches to a little brown horse named Cadger, belonging to Mr. J. C. James. On September 20 he rode this animal in the grand annual steeplechases of Adelaide, on the Thebarton Course. It was a bright and genial spring afternoon. Seven horses faced the starter in view of a large concourse of people. Cadger had two principal opponents—Leader, described by Gordon as a “great coarse, leggy brute, but large and a good jumper,” and Cock-tail, which he regarded as “a smart, wiry, varmint sort of nag, with the look of a neat well-bred stock-horse.” Cadger himself is thus depicted by its rider—“A really nice little hack, long and low, with plenty of substance and a fair show of speed, but there is not enough of him for cross-country carrying twelve stone.”

The race extended over more than four miles, being away out of the grounds and over the open lands, across a number of low fences and a sod-wall of moderate height with a fairly wide ditch on either side. This last made a spreading leap, and required a strong jumper to clear it handsomely. Gordon reckoned that none of the horses would be up to Melbourne level, but it made one of the finest struggles till then seen in Adelaide; and when Cadger came off a winner, largely by reason of Gordon's nerve and judgment, his reputation as an amateur rider, formerly strictly local, now spread at least throughout the Colony.

But on the whole it was a bad thing for Gordon. He took a fancy for Cadger, and bought him, having also two riding-horses in his stables, a somewhat expensive luxury for a man of limited income. As the year 1866 advanced, he entered more and more into the excitement of the turf, taking a strong interest in the sporting events of Melbourne, which he had never yet seen.

When the second parliamentary session of 1865 was closed Gordon took a trip across the border into Victoria, and in the December of that year rode at Ballarat in the handicap steeplechase on the Dowling Forest racecourse. Neil Black had bred, down at Glenormiston, a powerful black jumper which he named Ballarat. Gordon took much interest in putting the final touches to the training of this handsome horse, and at last he bought it and took it to Ballarat, where on December 1 he rode it to a memorable victory. Only six horses started on that sultry afternoon, but three of them were fine animals, Apelles, Blueskin, and Telegraph. The six got away together, and Apelles took the lead in clearing the first stone wall, Ballarat having only third place. Two of the horses refused the water-jump, leaving the race to only four candidates. On they rushed over the log fence and out into a big cultivation paddock, where Apelles fell, hurting his rider badly. Then Ballarat had the lead, with Blueskin behind, and Telegraph pounding away and being pounded in the third place. But this latter horse refused the fourth fence, while Apelles, whose rider had gallantly remounted, came up again into the contest, and



with a straining effort secured once more the lead, with Ballarat next and Blueskin third. From the very first Gordon had taken Ballarat very easily. The fine horse galloped steadily, as if only out for a bit of exercise. He was taken with extreme coolness over all obstacles, encouraged with kindness, though handled firmly. Through all the race the animal was managed without the least manifestation of that eager and irritable temper which mars the efforts of many riders in an exciting contest.

Blueskin, after clearing a log fence, had a double post-and-rails to bound over. He failed, and fell heavily, utterly losing his chance. Then the tussle lay between Ballarat and Apelles, but soon it became evident which of the two had the larger reserve of strength. In a race that very nearly approached five miles, the steady, cautious riding of Gordon had been a masterly policy, and with many lengths of lead, he cantered easily through the posts, looking back over his shoulder at the tempestuously galloping Apelles.

His riding on this occasion made Gordon a great favourite with the Ballarat racing public, and ever after that time, if his name were down to ride in a steeplechase, people used to watch for him, and the word would be eagerly passed along, "Here comes Gordon."

He then brought his horse Cadger to Melbourne for the races of New Year's Day, 1866. It was his first visit to Melbourne, and he seems to have enjoyed it. The day of his race was a magnificent one, the morning hot, but with a cool breeze spring-

ing up at midday. Towards four o'clock, when he was in the saddle, great banks of thunder-cloud gathered in threatening fashion, but the prospect of a drenching rain in no way dislodged the twenty thousand people who had gathered to see a great race between twelve of the best steeplechasers Australia had ever as yet possessed. The horses got away together, and Free trader, Apelles, and Ballarat took the lead, with Ingleside, Cadger, and Prince close behind. But at the very first leap the clumsy Cadger came down, and at the second Free trader failed to clear the rails, while at the third Ballarat had a fall. Then the grey horse Firetail, that had been holding back, shot forward for a place, and came in the winner, with the gallant Ballarat second, and Mr. S. Holgate's Apelles in the third place. Gordon's Cadger took but the eighth position in the procession, and justified his owner's earlier impression, that "he was not up to the Melbourne standard."

It gives one an idea how thin and meagre Gordon must have been, when we remember that he was quite six feet high, yet in this race, with saddle and bridle included, he weighed only 9 st. 10 lbs.

So Gordon went home again with the discomfited Cadger—home to the quieter joys of the Parliamentary Library on the North Terrace, and to the slow debates of the House. And yet there can be no doubt but that his chief interest lay with horses, and his keenest aspirations in sport.

## CHAPTER IV

### GORDON AS A POET

THERE was at that time published in Melbourne a well-conducted sporting paper called *Bell's Life in Victoria*, of which Gordon was a regular reader. In its columns various waggish writers used to give their tips for the coming events, and especially for the Cup race, in verses sometimes fairly good, but more generally mere doggerel.

In the August of 1865, when a South Australian horse named Tin Whiffler was entered by Mr. Walter Craig for the Melbourne Cup, Gordon took an intense interest in his performances, and was moved to predict his victory in the first notable verses of his that ever were in print. This, though purporting to be only one of the rhyming tips common enough in *Bell's Life*, rises into vigorous thoughts, and modulates at times in musical lines unknown to any other of the set. He called the lines 'Visions in the Smoke from my Old Clay Pipe,' and professes to see in the curling wreaths the struggle that is to be.

" Rest and be thankful ! On the verge  
Of the tall cliff rugged and grey,  
Whose granite base the breakers surge  
And shiver their frothy spray,

Outstretched I gaze on the eddying wreath  
That gathers and flits away,  
With the surf beneath, and between my teeth  
The stem of the 'ancient clay.'"

Then follows a fine outburst, in which he justifies the sport of horse-racing :

"In their own generation the wise may sneer—  
They hold our sport in derision;  
Perchance to sophist, or sage, or seer,  
Were allotted a graver vision.  
Yet if man, of all the Creator planned,  
His noblest work is reckoned,  
Of the works of His hand, by sea or by land,  
The horse may at least rank second."

And so he moves on to his vision of the race for the Cup :

"The flag is lowered : 'They're off !' 'They come !'  
The squadron is sweeping on :  
A sway in the crowd,—a murmuring hum ;  
'They're here !' 'They're past !' 'They're gone !'  
They came with the rush of the southern surf  
On the bar of the storm-girt bay ;  
And like muffled drums on the sounding turf,  
Their hoof-strokes echo away."

The vision shows a victory, but a narrow one, for Tim Whiffler ; and then, with a fine description of the evening approaching over the ocean with "storm and rattle and tempest" in its wake, he concludes a piece that, in spite of its easy and often careless flow, is a genuine poem.

Tim Whiffler was no victor after all ; but he was very heavily handicapped, carrying two stone more

than any other horse. The race was won by The Barb, while Exile came second, and Falcon was third, poor Tim securing only the fourth place.

But long before his gift of prophecy was discredited, Gordon had attracted notice in Melbourne by the ring of his verse, and the editor of *Bell's Life* had given him to understand that more of his work would be acceptable. So it came that at the end of October, the paper published Fytte I and Fytte II of the series called 'Ye Wearie Wayfarer.' The first is a short introduction to the series, the second a stirring reminiscence of the hunting field in the Cotswold Hills.

A week later came Fytte III and Fytte IV; the one a glorification of the courage that swells within a man as he bestrides a noble beast :

"The stimulant which the horseman feels  
When he gallops fast and straight,  
To his better nature most appeals,  
And charity conquers hate."

The second is a rhapsody in favour of pluck and manliness, and of sport as the nurse of these qualities :

"No game was ever yet worth a rap  
For a rational man to play  
Into which no accident, no mishap,  
Could possibly find its way."

On November 10 appeared Fyttes V and VI, of which the former is a philosophic discourse upon man's claim to kill and make prey of all inferior creatures, not only for his needs but for his amusements. The poet demands that if we work our will

and derive joy from slaughter, we should learn to meet with dauntless heart our own fate when it descends upon us :

“Shall we, hard-hearted to their fates thus,  
Soft-hearted shrink from our own,  
When the measure we mete is meted to us,  
When we reap as we’ve always sown ?

Short shrift ! sharp fate ! dark doom to dree !  
Hard struggle though quickly ending !  
At home or abroad, by land or by sea,  
In peace or in war, sore trials must be,  
And worse may happen to you or to me,  
For none are secure, and none can flee  
From a destiny impending.”

A week later came the seventh instalment of this eccentric series. It sings of times gone by, and the glories of gallops long since ridden with comrades now quiet in the sod ; and again it glorifies the exultant feelings of a merry gallop :

“Oh, the vigour with which the air is rife !  
The spirit of joyous motion ;  
The fever, the fulness of animal life,  
Can be drained from no earthly potion !  
The lungs with the living gas grow light,  
And the limbs feel the strength of ten,  
While the chest expands with its maddening might,  
God’s glorious oxygen.  
Thus the measured stroke on elastic sward,  
Of the steed three-parts extended,  
Hard held, the breath of his nostrils broad  
With the golden ether blended :  
Then the leap, the rise from the springy turf,  
The rush through the buoyant air,  
And the light shock landing—the veriest serf  
Is an emperor then and there.”

Many who have no inclination for the joys of the racecourse will feel in such lines the most eloquent and effective description in our language, of the elation that fills a man's mind as he cleaves the air at falcon speed, with the strenuous motion beneath him of a high-mettled horse. The poem concludes with a verse full of Gordon's characteristic mood :

"Thy riddles grow dark, oh drifting cloud,  
And thy misty shapes grow drear ;  
Thou hang'st in the air like a shadowy shroud,  
And I am of lighter cheer :  
Though our future lot is a sable blot,  
Though the wise ones of earth will blame us,  
Though our saddles will rot, and our rides be forgot,  
Dum vivimus, vivamus."

The last "fytte" of the series appeared in *Bell's Life* on November 24, 1866, a strange production for a sporting journal. It hovers round the riddle of existence, asking what is the meaning of man's life, and whitherward it tends.

It is in this poem that those well-known lines occur, beginning with this most suggestive little picture :

"Hark, the bells on distant cattle  
Waft across the range ;  
Through the golden-tufted wattle,  
Music low and strange ;  
Like the marriage peal of fairies  
Comes the tinkling sound,  
Or like peals of sweet St. Mary's,  
On far English ground."

This favourite passage ends with lines that are most singularly expressive of Gordon himself and his views of life :

“Question not, but live and labour  
Till yon goal be won,  
Helping every feeble neighbour,  
Seeking help from none :  
Life is mostly froth and bubble ;  
Two things stand like stone :  
Kindness in another's trouble,  
Courage in your own.”

During this same year, 1866, Gordon published also two more of the pieces which he called ‘Whiffs from the Pipe.’ These are purely racing pieces, with no pretence of poetry in them, though they have a certain cleverness of their own. ‘The Fields of Coleraine’ describes the chances of the various horses entered for the Great Western Stakes; ‘Credat Judæus Apella’ was written in reply to a request from the editor of *Bell's Life*, to supply the paper with a rhyming tip for the coming Champion Stakes. He had no tip to give, and indeed assumes a sarcastic attitude towards those who trust much to the prophets. Smith takes his oath that Cowra can win it, while Brown, Jones, and Robinson are equally positive that her chance is insignificant. “But,” says the poet, in the words of Horace, “let the Jew Apella believe them; I don't.”

In these and a few similar pieces of the same period there is nothing notable except that power, so strongly exemplified in Scott and Macaulay, of weaving proper names into verse so as to make them have a musical and striking effect. But the other set, entitled ‘Ye Wearie Wayfarer,’ is in the main upon a wholly different level. Professing to be merely rollicking verses on sporting topics, they



give the reader the pleasure of coming unexpectedly upon deep veins of touching feeling, hidden away in the recesses of a manly heart. Gordon was one who utterly detested a whining pathos, and who, in his fear of false sentiment or affectation, would hide his tenderer self behind an exterior of brusqueness. But while he scorns the tear, and crushes weak susceptibilities under the guise of roughness or even of cynicism, the deep emotions that thrilled within his soul peep up through their careless setting with all the charm of the unexpected.

Amid these professedly sporting verses he unfolds the half-hopeless, half-courageous philosophy of a soul that spent many dark hours in speculation; and the moral runs through the whole, that though darkness may enshroud equally our origin and our fate, though a deep darkness lie on the ultimate meaning of all this spacious universe as we see it, yet will the wise man keep a stout heart within him, meet his troubles, his unknown future, and the dim recesses of his fate, with a heart of unmoved constancy, and indeed of cheerful trustfulness.

"Onward, onward, toiling ever,  
Weary steps and slow,  
Doubting oft, despairing never,  
To the goal we go."

And truly Gordon was more and more to have need for this encouraging philosophy. His affairs were now anything but bright, and they were soon to pass into a region of gloom. His seven thousand pounds, if wisely invested, ought to have brought

him in those days a good permanent income, and though the keeping of racehorses is by no means an inexpensive pastime, yet it is probable enough that, as his tastes in other respects were quiet, he might have paid his way and moved along prudently in life.

But one after another his various investments showed themselves to have been utterly injudicious. He lost his tenants at Macdonnell Bay and could find no others; while he soon had reason to believe that the money he had invested at Nichol Bay was practically thrown away.

The resignation of his seat in Parliament was partly due to the necessity he was under of going to West Australia to look after the land he had purchased in this latter investment. Meantime a little son had been born to him, and so, leaving the mother and child in the cottage at Glenelg, he went away for a month or two to the west. For several weeks he camped out, and saw something of the wilds of West Australia; but he was cured of any romantic notions he had entertained of making for himself a home and a living by turning the wilderness into a sheep-farm.

Returning in the early part of 1867 with the full consciousness that his affairs were in ruinous trim, he gave up the cottage at Glenelg, and once more set up his habitation near Mount Gambier, living on the wreck of his means, but nursing a hope that he might yet make headway by means of literature. His verses in *Bell's Life*, though professing to be only sporting lines, had attracted the most favourable

attention of that small but brilliant literary coterie which was then gathering in Melbourne, and he was encouraged to continue the series. On April 20, 1867, appeared his poem entitled 'Banker's Dream,' in which, as it stood at first, the coming performances of Ballarat were lauded, though, as a matter of fact, ere the verses appeared in print the horse had been scratched. Gordon was not now the owner of Ballarat. He had sold to Mr. Watson that fine horse, celebrated in those days for his "great pace, great weight-carrying power, and his adroitness as a jumper."

On August 3 of the same year appeared that rhyming prophecy of the Cup race which he calls 'Ex Fumo Dare Lucem,' the later half containing much genuine poetry, though again, as usual, enfolding a philosophy too melancholic to be healthful.

In 1866 the *Australasian* had been founded, and in its earliest numbers there appeared verses from the pen of Gordon, all of them, however, anonymous. The first of these was that rhyming dialogue he called 'The Old Leaven,' now printed in recent editions of his collected works. It is somewhat poor in general effect, though not without a good line here and there. But it was in the January of 1867, in a piece he called 'Frustra,' that Gordon for the first time fully proved that he could rank with the masters in the music of his lines.

"Thy voice in my ear still mingles  
With the voice of whispering trees ;  
Thy kiss on my cheek still tingles  
At each kiss of the summer breeze.

While dreams of the past are thronging  
For voice and for touch in vain,  
I am waiting and watching and longing :  
Thou comest not back again."

The whole poem, a little altered, was afterwards introduced as a song into 'Ashtaroath.'

About this time he told Tenison Woods that he felt sure he could do something in the way of poetry. And there is no doubt that he was nurturing the hope of earning a living by his pen. Vague allusions in his letters seem to show that he had a notion of writing a novel, and that he was making overtures to several of the colonial newspapers, of what nature it seems now impossible to discover. He contributed to the *Australasian*, in August 1867, that musical but most melancholy set of verses which he called 'Whither Bound,' but next month printed them in his first volume under the title 'Quare Fatigasti.'

This volume, his first attempt in the way of a book, was published at his expense by George Robertson and Co. of Melbourne. It appeared in September 1867, and was entitled 'Sea Spray and Smoke Drift,' the allusion being to the manner in which the verses had been written. For the poet had in most cases composed them while sitting with his old clay pipe on his favourite rocky arm-chair, overlooking the ceaseless arrival of Antarctic waves that broke and foamed on the bluestone ledges and the tangled weeds far below him.

He printed five hundred copies, at a cost of about £50, and if he could have sold them all at the

published price of five shillings, he would have made a reasonable profit from the venture. But instead of finding five hundred purchasers he failed to secure a hundred; and with the exception of *Bell's Life* none of the Australian journals took any notice of the slender volume, except that in one or two cases a contemptuous paragraph appeared.

Unreasonable people will make this the subject of some indignant declamation, but it is to be remembered that a poet with any freshness in him has always to make his audience, he has always to gather in allegiance as time rolls on, and happier he whose reputation is of steady growth. When it springs up like a mushroom to full size in a day or two, it is almost certainly due to some trick, some time-serving compliance with phases of fashion, or subservience to faction feeling. The poet who at the first month of his appearance is greeted with applause has almost certainly no new message to offer, has no strong individuality of his own. In proportion as he has good work to do, so will be his need of educating his circle. As for journals, the men who write them are chosen for other purposes than poetic criticism; they lead a busy life; if they like poetry at all, they like the good old standard authors. It would be foolish to think that the journalist to whom such reviews are entrusted would take home the volume of each unknown versifier who wishes a notice, and read it and re-read it till he actually began to realize the flavour of the work, if it had any. In thirty-nine cases out of forty he would have no adequate return for his labour.

So Gordon's book was born into a cold world. If he had been a man entirely wise and practical, he would have expected little else; he would have laid his account for a ten years' battle in which to make himself known and felt. But there is every reason to believe that he was bitterly disappointed. He must have been conscious that, as we all now own, the little book contained the strongest poetry till then published in Australia. It opens with that manly and most original conception of the dying hours of Achilles, which he calls *Podas Okus*, the Homeric epithet of the hero. Then comes a set of verses almost as fine on the death of Burke, whose burly figure and dauntless courage had a great fascination for Gordon.

It contains several ballads worthy to rank among the best in the language. 'The Roll of the Kettle-drum' has a ring and a roll born of the hoarse sound of the surf amid which it came into existence. 'The Last Leap' and 'Fauconshawe' are masterpieces of their kind, and there are poems such as 'Cui Bono,' 'Quare Fatigasti,' and 'Wormwood and Nightshade,' which unfold in lines of melancholy music that sad despairing philosophy which had taken possession of the poet's soul in his lonely musings along the cliffs of Cape Northumberland, or in the wattle-darkened valleys between the cape and his home. One of the finest poems in the volume is entitled 'Whisperings in Wattle-Boughs.' It gives us a glimpse of Gordon's mind as in those days he pondered over a reckless past and the hearts estranged, then lost for ever.

"Oh, tell me, father mine, ere the good ship crossed the brine,  
On the gangway one mute hand-grip we exchanged.  
Do you, past the grave, employ, for your stubborn, reckless boy,  
Those petitions that in life were ne'er estranged?"

It is one of the three most musical and most pathetic poems ever written in Australia.

Nevertheless the volume failed to pay for its cost, and a second one, issued a few months later, had a still more frosty reception. 'Sea Spray and Smoke Drift' most certainly had qualities which would, as years rolled by, have given it a strong reputation, but 'Ashtaroith' could have no hope of winning its way by reason of any inherent interest. This is by no means equivalent to the assertion that it has no merits; but its merits are most assuredly not of the sort to command a sale, and practically the whole of the five hundred copies printed lay like a weary load on the shelves of Clarson and Massina, who published it. They were never startled by the appearance of any eccentric person who wanted to buy a copy.

'Ashtaroith' is in general sentiment and handling closely akin to 'Faust'; but 'Ashtaroith' is purely lyrical, while 'Faust' is a mingling of the dramatic and the philosophic. Perhaps it is more to the purpose to say that 'Ashtaroith' is weak and 'Faust' is strong; at least the Australian poem constantly suggests weakness by constantly reminding the reader of its mighty predecessor. Instead of the profound study of Faust's mind, we have the more or less melodramatic Hugo, distinctly more in touch with the Faust of the Opera than the Faust of Goethe's drama. Instead of Mephistopheles we have

Orion, with much imitation of the necromancing business.

The long lyrical monologues of both these theatrical figures are inappropriate. Though often deeply suggestive in their sombre philosophy, and very generally musical, they have none of that keen revelation of human character which alone could give them force and interest. There are verses and lines that stand on a very paltry level, scarcely admissible in the poet's corner of a third-rate newspaper.

"Indeed, I have not the least idea ;  
The man is certainly mad.  
He wedded my sister, Dorothea,  
And used her cruelly bad."

A sprinkling of such verses may readily disgust the ear of a reader whose tastes are poetic.

The Margaret of 'Faust' suggests the Agatha of 'Ashtaroht'; but the one is flesh and blood, the other a mystical shadow. The Walpurgis Nacht interlude of Goethe is parodied, not without some lyrical beauty, in Gordon's scene of "A peak in a mountainous country, overhanging a rocky pass. Hugo and Orion on black horses. Midnight." Moreover, Gordon takes from the great master a taste for mediæval Latin and a certain wilful eccentricity of plot. But the reader who wades through the first half, and begins there to find the imitative element decline, will probably follow with greater pleasure a story of increased intelligibility, and will feel a certain glamour of poetry, even though devoid of that dramatic power which ought to be the life of such a composition.



Few people, even now, when Gordon's fame is assured, have much liking for 'Ashtaroath.' It is not wonderful, therefore, that in the poet's lifetime it attracted no attention. He had his bill of a hundred pounds to meet at the end of 1867, and his funds were running low. Not only had he kept racehorses and visited race-meetings, but he had been very free in lending to people in any need of cash. He never was in the least a judge of human character, and any man who seemed a good-hearted sort of fellow, jolly in conversation, ready to risk his life on a horse and over a fence, would be taken at his face-value as the soul of honour. To some dozen and more of acquaintances after that type whom his money brought around him he lent right royally, and when they dropped out of sight, and no word ever came of repayment, he took the matter with a laugh and a little cynic philosophy. Apparently it troubled him little for a while, as he was not a man gifted with a great deal of providence.

## CHAPTER V

### IN BALLARAT

As the year 1867 drifted on past its middle it became clear enough that Gordon's little fortune was dissipated. It was therefore necessary that he should find a means of earning an income, and for a few months he nourished the vain idea that he might make money out of poetry. When that dream had miserably vanished he formed a plan to startle the public with a novel, but he never got beyond the plan, and there was indeed no chance of making a living out of locally printed works of fiction. He had therefore to descend as happily as he might from these ideal heights, and even earn his bread as other folks have to do who are less troubled with brains and aspirations.

About this time he heard that a business in connection with horses was for sale in Ballarat. He remembered well from his visit to that city the fine stables attached to Craig's Hotel, and he knew that the livery and letting in connection therewith made a profitable concern. He entered into treaty for the business, and while his wife and infant son went to stay for a time with the Riddochs at Yallum, he took

a trip to Ballarat to inquire and negotiate. So it came about that he bought the business, raising the money to pay for horses and vehicles by means of a mortgage on the last remaining piece of land, his farm near Penola.

He would have eight pounds a week of rent to pay, and some new horses would have to be bought; but horse-feed was then cheap, and there seemed good reason to expect a brisk enough trade, and so, in spite of his manifest want of all business capacity, he took his little family to Ballarat in the November of 1867, making a comfortable home for them in that upper part of Sturt Street which is on the way to the Botanical Gardens. His double-fronted weather-board cottage of six rooms stood in an enclosure near Lake Wendouree, which is now part of the grounds of the Convent.

So for a year to follow we have to picture the poet in a new environment; busy with a groom or two rubbing down horses, in order that the gilded youths of Ballarat or the festive young bank clerks might be able on a borrowed mount to follow the hounds; or harnessing a smart hack in buggy-shafts that some commercial traveller might spin along the roads.

He generally reached the stables soon after sunrise, and worked about the yard all day long, a lanky figure, now looking a little scraggy with his flowing yellowish beard, over which he peered with short-sighted eyes. As a rule he was clad in the monkey jacket which military men use as undress uniform; he wore tight corduroy trousers, and high boots.

Sometimes a cap, more often his trusty cabbage-tree hat, surmounted his lean figure. While at work with the horses he was generally smoking a short, straight-stemmed clay pipe, of the pattern he specially affected.

Though he visited his home once or twice a day, he could rarely spend an evening there, for a livery-stables business is not to be run upon the eight hours principle. Work was rarely over till midnight, and in that first anxious year he was resolved to be upon the spot so long as the place was open. Yet though he had to be there, there was little actual work to be done in the evenings; and he was glad to pass the idle hours in the billiard-room. He had no great skill with the cue, and was never much fascinated by the game; but there were a few young men of education and gentlemanly bearing who were accustomed to drop in for an hour or two. With these he liked to pass the time, and if the scoring grew languid, and Tuckett the marker fixed up the cues again on their rack, Gordon was better content to hear a racy conversation succeed to the click of the balls. He never talked literature; his comrades had in general no taste for it. But of horses and their doings, of dogs, and the prize-ring, and deeds of valour in battle, especially cavalry charges, he would talk with animation till midnight, contenting himself strictly with a solitary glass when the hour for refreshment came round.

A livery-stables business is necessarily to a large extent a credit business, and demands a certain amount of book-keeping, for which Gordon was by

temperament and training quite unfit. He worked hard, but affairs began to drift. After Christmas horse-feed advanced greatly in price, while competition became keener. Gordon's bank account fell into a state of ill-health, and though he bestirred himself for its recovery, taking the dogs of the Coursing Club out to his home to be fed and tended in part by Mrs. Gordon, and himself undertaking for a small salary the duties of secretary to the Ballarat Hunt Club, he never was able to put it again in good condition.

Feeling his want of business capacity he thought of taking a partner, and his choice fell upon Harry Mount, a young fellow who then enjoyed his glass and his game of billiards at Craig's. Now Mount was one of the most brilliant amateur horsemen of the Colony, and could guide a jumper over a hurdle better than any other man then living in Australia; but what need was there for two first-rate amateur jockeys in the firm? A good steady business man would have been much more to the purpose.

Nevertheless the firm of Gordon and Mount proceeded to face the barriers that always lie thick before those who mean to found a business; and they blundered along, striking heavily from time to time. Gordon's nearness of vision brought him into many accidents. In June 1868 it was a badly broken finger through failure to see that he was just at the heels of a kicker: the finger healed with a great lump in it, but an injury to the head a month or so later was not so easily cured. He was riding a powerful black horse out through the gates when it

swerved and Gordon's head was smashed with great violence against a hard-wood post he had not observed. He was carried home insensible with his jaw fractured, some of his teeth gone, and a dent in his skull that up till the time of his death could easily be felt with the finger. He was never afterwards wholly the same man, and his tendency to solitary musings of a sombre character, though concealed to men in general, was certainly increased, and from this time became painfully well known to his intimate friends.

Here, too, in Ballarat, his little son sickened and died. We have no record of his feelings as he was laid in that old cemetery. He was a reticent man, and even in his verse he has no word of that time; we have no means of making any guess as to how bitter it may have been to him. But, at any rate, during 1868 troubles gathered round him. It would be a mistake, however, to think that his financial gloom was due even chiefly to mere ill-luck. It sprang out of his own fundamental character. Here, for instance, in all his adverse circumstances, he persisted in keeping racehorses of his own. He still had the brown horse Cadger, but he had bought a stout little bay steeplechaser named Viking, bred at Warrnambool, on whose jumping powers he placed great reliance, and he had likewise a very nimble mare named Maude, which he rode on Saturdays at the Hunt Club. She was a very beautiful creature, though never a great success in racing.

Gordon used her as his mount when he joined the Ballarat troop of Light Horse. The members of

this company, once so well known in Victoria, were only some five-and-twenty in number, and they used to carry on their drill in the tan-covered yard of Gordon's stables. The poet soon became a friend of Captain E. C. Moore, and joined the troop. Anything in the nature of military ardour had always a glamour for him, and the horse-drill delighted him beyond all things. The troop used to parade on a bit of park-land surrounded by a tall picket-fence. Gordon, often detained by his business past the time for falling in, would charge up the streets in full uniform on his mare, Maude, take the fence at a flying leap, and fall in sedately, to the immense amusement of his fellow-members and the crowd.

Mr. W. Davidson, now of the Public Works Department, recalling fondly the days of old when he used, in the Ballarat troop, to ride his mimic charger at Gordon's side, relates how the poet was once a candidate for the position of sergeant, a rank to which the members of the corps had the right of electing one of their number. There were three aspirants in all; but one of them had long reckoned it a certainty that he would be elected, and not only canvassed the troop industriously, but informed his people in England that he was practically appointed; whereupon there arrived from a wealthy uncle, a handsome dress sword, consigned to the nephew, whom he addressed as Lieutenant. This and other trifles exasperated the corps, and feeling was inclined to run high. Gordon made the grave proposition that as it was a fighting position

and the better man ought to be appointed, he and the other candidate should be shut into a loose box, and kept there till they had thrashed the question out between them, the winner to have the promotion. The step went to neither, for the third candidate was quite as eligible, and for the sake of peace the corps elected him.

As the year 1868 drifted on, the financial condition of the livery-stables business grew less and less satisfactory. By the month of August matters were posting on express for the Insolvency Court, when a little money came from England to Gordon. It offered a chance of clearing off the accumulating liabilities, and he resolved to seize the opportunity of escaping from a difficult position. This no doubt would still leave him with the *Penola* mortgage on his hands, whose interest much exceeded the rent he could get from the property. But the state of his affairs and of his mind will be best comprehended from a letter he wrote to Mr. Riddoch in October. Gordon's letters in the main would be scarcely interesting enough for publication. They deal little with his literary work, and not very much with his riding, or his general way of life. They are mostly filled with business items of only temporary moment. But now and again a long letter gives vivid glances of the manner of man he was.

"October 6, 1868.

"MY DEAR RIDDOCH,

"I wrote you a short note a few days ago, and promised you a longer one. Mrs. Gordon went away by the steamer *Penola*. She was anxious to get a change, and



I was glad for many reasons that she should go away for a time.

"I gave up the stables on the first of this month. I have paid altogether £350 for rent. Let me tell you some good news now before I go to the bad. I have had some money left to me by the deaths of my father's first cousin, and of my grandmother. I ought to have received it long ago. It is not much, but it will set me straight.

"I heard last mail from my uncle, Hamilton Gordon. He wants me to go home to England. It seems I am the nearest heir to an entailed estate called Esslemont in Scotland. He thinks it a certainty, but I fancy there is a flaw in the entail. Huntley Gordon, the last owner, left it by will to his daughter, and as the flaw in the entail has not been proved, my uncle wants me to go home and appeal against the will.

"I do not think I shall go, even if I could get the estate; having no male heir it would be of no use to me beyond my lifetime, and that is very uncertain.

"I have been awfully bothered about money difficulties; but I think I have now paid off everybody but you and Lawson (the mortgagee). Getting in the money that is still due to me here is very difficult. But I have sold off everything, and though many things were sacrificed, I did not do so badly after all.

"Mrs. Gordon and I did all the work between us. Indeed she did a great deal more than I, all through the troubled time. She has worked like a trump; although I never told her how desperate things were looking with me, she suspected that much was wrong, and she tried hard to cheer me up and keep me straight, and did not worry me. She has more pluck in her little finger than ever I had in my whole body.

"When I lost the Ballarat Hunt Cup on Maude I thoroughly gave in, and refused to ride Cadger for the Selling Steeplechase, saying that it was no use. She said, 'Don't give in like that, old man; you've gone too far to back out now, and no one else can ride the horse. It's only a small stake, but every shilling is of consequence to us now. I was always against racing, but you've taken your own way, and now you must carry it out.'

"So I rode Cadger and won. Then Viking won the hurdle race. So I didn't do so badly.

"You have no idea how sick of horse-racing and steeple-chasing I now am ; but when a man gets so deep into the mire, it is hard to draw back. I have to ride three races in Melbourne next Saturday, though I am scarcely fit to ride a donkey at present.

"I do not fancy I shall have any luck, but my luck can't possibly be worse than it has been. I would like never to see a horse again, let alone ride one.

"The stables have been very badly managed, and Mount, though a well-meaning fellow, has a head worse if possible for business than mine. But after that bad fall of mine I was bound to leave the books entirely in his hands, and a pretty mess he made of the accounts. I could hardly have done worse myself.

"Since that heavy fall of mine I have taken to drink. I don't get drunk, but I drink a good deal more than I ought to, for I have a constant pain in my head and back. I get so awfully low-spirited and miserable, that if I had a strong sleeping-draught near me, I am afraid I might take it. I have carried one that I should never awake from.

"You will perhaps be awfully shocked, old fellow, to see me write in this strain ; but I am not exaggerating, at least. If I could only persuade myself that I am a little mad, I might do something of that sort. I really do feel a little mad at times, and I begin to think I have had more trouble than I can put up with, I could almost say more than I deserve, though this would probably be untrue.

"When I parted from my wife on the pier and saw the steamer take her away, I felt sure I should never see her again ; and when I got back to Ballarat, and went into the empty house, I was very low-spirited. I used to smoke all night long. I could not sleep, and had to take a stiff nobbler in the morning. But I got through my work somehow, and settled up all my business.

"I am going to send you the new *Colonial*. It is a very good magazine. Marcus Clarke, the editor, is a very nice young fellow.

"I returned to Melbourne yesterday, and am staying

with Mr. Robert Power at Toorak. You shall hear further from me by the next steamer, if I get through Saturday's work.

"Yours very truly,

"A. LINDSAY GORDON."

The Saturday's work to which he here refers, consisted in the riding of three steeplechases at Flemington on October 10, 1868. He won all three. The first was for the Melbourne Hunt Club Cup. Gordon rode Major Baker's black gelding Babbler. Six horses were entered for it. Contrary to his custom Gordon took the lead from the first, and crossed the earliest posts and rails decidedly ahead of Acrobat and Cigar, which were the next in order. Babbler bungled over the next fence, but Gordon let him take his way more easily for a minute or two, and was at some pains to steady and encourage him. Soon afterwards he took the lead again, and thundered down the straight with Acrobat and Cigar at his heels. Cigar came down at some hurdles, and Babbler won by three or four lengths.

Then came the Metropolitan Steeplechase, for which again six horses were entered. Gordon rode his own Viking, which he had not yet sold. It was a fairly easy victory, Viking remaining in company with two competitors in quite a social fashion till near the end of the race, when he began to exert himself, and, forging ahead, left a good many lengths between him and his nearest pursuer.

Next was the Selling Steeplechase, contested by five horses, of which Gordon's Cadger was one of two favourites ; the other, Canary, being ridden by an

experienced jockey named Downs. Firetail led off, but baulked at the first obstacle. Cadger and Canary settled down to a sharp tussle, both clearing everything neatly and without an error. Downs kept a little way behind, waiting to make a strenuous rush at the end. But Cadger had been just as cautiously handled as Canary, and when the final effort was made, Canary's nose could never get in a line with Cadger's tail, and again the crowd rasped their throats in a long hoarse cheer, as Gordon in the last few yards of the race shot ahead and won with a length or two to spare. Thereupon Cadger was sold to the highest bidder for £40, and Gordon was eased of the expense of keeping him.

A long series of victories had now given Gordon the reputation of being the most brilliant steeplechase rider in Australia. How much his success was due to utter recklessness of his life it is hard to say; but it is almost hopeless for a rider who has some sort of inclination towards keeping alive, to compete against a man who rides in the secret hope of being killed, and that, as we know from his own words, was the state of Gordon's mind on the day when he rode the three steeplechases. Probably enough he felt much the same on other occasions.

Experts declared that Gordon's manner of riding was far from being technically perfect. He leaned far back in his saddle in galloping, and in jumping his shoulders might be seen to come almost into contact with the crupper of the horse. His shortness of sight was a huge drawback, and his hands were

clumsy. But he was possessed of two first-rate qualities, a resolute nerve and a clear judgment. He picked his panel with deliberate care, and after that never daunted his horse with the least hint of irresolution. Moreover, he had the rare faculty of putting himself in full sympathy with his horse; so that its spirits rose as he became ardent, and it would strain every muscle in its body to respond to a nameless something, born as much of an iron will as of an innate love for horses, a quality which few riders possess, but many would willingly acquire if only it were a thing that could be learnt. Gordon knew how to train a horse without overstraining him, how to gain his confidence and goodwill; yet well did he know at the critical pinch how to take out of him the best that was in him.

But of the thousands who cheered him as in his rustling silks he trotted from the winning-post to the gate of the saddling paddock, how few saw in him anything but the successful jockey! How very few were they who guessed the inner life of the man, and knew that he had thoughts too profound to be even guessed at by the folks that lay the odds and fill the club-rooms with tobacco-smoke! Even in the time of his Ballarat troubles, his thoughts had reverted for solace to poetry, and he poured out in melodious verse the sombre musings that were now more than ever familiar to his distempered mind.

In his visits to Melbourne he had made an acquaintance, though never an intimate friendship, with Marcus Clarke, who was one of the very few

men who recognized in him from the first a true poet. Clarke asked him to contribute to the *Colonial Monthly*, which he was then editing, and in December 1868 there appeared the first of a short series of Gordon's poems which were destined to be printed in that magazine. It was entitled 'Doubtful Dreams,' a mournful retrospect of boyish aspirations, and the contrast they displayed when compared with the reality.

"The young dreams surely have faded.  
Young dreams ! Old dreams of young days.  
Will the new dreams vex us as they did,  
Or as things worth censure or praise ?  
For the great things of earth are small things,  
The longest life is a span,  
And there is an end to all things,  
A season to every man,  
Whose glory is dust and ashes,  
Whose spirit is but a spark  
That forth from the darkness flashes  
And flickers out in the dark."

With fortune against him, but literary aspirations strong within him, it must have come as a cordial to him to read in the *Colonial Monthly* of that period an article on Australian poets, in which he is assigned the leading place. The writer declares that "Gordon is the most Australian of our literary aspirants, a genuine unconscious tone gives life to his work. We look forward with some pride and much hope to the day when it will be a boast to have discerned his genius in 1868." The article was anonymous, but it would be a genuine pleasure to

know who was the man who had the courage thus to write, at a time when Gordon was poor and little known. One is almost inclined to guess it must have been Marcus Clarke himself; but the style is not to be with any certainty recognized as that of the author of 'His Natural Life.'

## CHAPTER VI

### IN MELBOURNE

WHILE the prophecy of a bright poetic fame in the future may have had a cheering effect upon Gordon, the immediate problem of making a living was nowise solved. The racing festival of Melbourne was approaching in the following month after his departure from Ballarat; he was appreciated as a trainer and rider, and he had the offer to take charge of several horses then in training. Although he never took money for riding, and jealously preserved his status as a gentleman amateur, he was generally promised a share of the stakes, and a living was possible, but only just possible, if he rode on those terms as a means of livelihood. Until Mrs. Gordon should return from South Australia, and they could consider their plans for the future, he resolved to fill up his time in training and riding.

During the months of October and November in 1868 he stayed a welcome guest with Mr. Robert Power at Toorak. Mr. Power had two horses in training, Laurel and Balinuris; Gordon supervised the work of the jockeys who took charge of these,



but he had under his especial care the sturdy little Viking, of which Mr. Power was now part owner.

During the month he wrote: "I am much better than I was. Having some occupation is a great thing, and in my spare time I am getting some articles ready for the *Australasian*. But I am hardly fit for much study, though I am very temperate, taking only one glass of grog when I go to bed, and I do not smoke quite so much, though still perhaps more than is good for me. So far as muscular action is concerned I am not weak, and when the fit is on and the headache is off, I can take as much exercise as ever. I walk alongside the horses some miles every morning before breakfast, and then take a swim in the Yarra."

On the final day of the spring meeting at Flemington Gordon rode Viking to a signal victory. He was not, however, a great gainer by this success, for, as he needed money to send round to Mrs. Gordon and to pay her fare back to Melbourne, he had sold his share in the horse for £75. At the start of the race, Gordon kept well in the background, but on reaching the second fence two of the leading horses refused to cross; other two led over it, and soon the active Viking, clearing the obstacle lightly and easily, made a little effort and placed himself even with them. Then the three strode side by side for a long time, and entered together on the straight run for the finish. Gordon's skill determined the contest. He brought the staunch little Viking, overweighted as she was under a handicap of 11 st. 3 lbs., out of the trio, and though the

horses behind him laboured hard to the goading of whip and spur, Gordon easily put a dozen lengths of clear turf behind him, and as he neared the winning-post, he reined in the gallant Viking to an easy canter, while stand and flat let go its pent-up roar of applause.

Gordon passed on unheeding in a humour much less triumphant than cynical, for in spite of his love of horses he had taken a mortal aversion to racing. "I do not find much pleasure now in riding," he writes the week after this Cup festival; "I did not go near the course on Cup Day, nor yet on Friday; and on Saturday, after my steeplechase was over, I locked myself up in one of the empty horse-boxes in the saddling paddock, and smoked a pipe while the other races were being run. I ride only for money now, and who knows but that if I were to stop a little longer at this game, I might become less particular than I ought to be. If I could find any sort of work in which I could earn enough money to live by and keep my wife in bread and clothes, I shall swear against ever going near a racecourse again."

But besides the unpleasant atmosphere of his racing life, he felt that, from a pecuniary point of view, it was precarious, and not unlikely to warp the principles of even the most upright nature. At this time he wrote to Mr. Riddoch :

"I did not make much money by the steeplechases which I won; hardly any at all by the last and best of them. It was bad management, for though I do not hold with betting as a rule, still it is not much

worse than speculations of other kinds, and a man is justified in risking five pounds when he has a good chance of making it into a hundred. Besides, I've swallowed too many camels to strain now at a gnat. The truth is, I made an awful mess of the whole affair. Power wanted me to keep my share, one-half, of Viking, but I preferred to sell it and get the £75 at once. About £15 of this I proposed to lay off at ten to one. Well, I got the horse down to ten to one on the market by a justifiable ruse, but I left another man to get the odds on for me, and he failed to do this. I only got the half of what I had intended winning—£25. This only covered some double events which I lost.

"I think I will ride Babbler at Ballarat. Major Baker again offered to go me halves in the stakes, and pay the expenses, if I would ride Babbler. The stakes are only £200, but that will be £100 to me if I win. Babbler is a good lasting, honest brute and a very safe jumper. The four-mile course will suit him.

"I am heartily sick of the life I have been leading, and I do not now care even for riding. The only ride that I have enjoyed since my last fall was the hunt in which Mrs. Gordon rode so well alongside of me."

The month of October and part of November had passed in a time of quiet recovery in the house of Mr. Robert Power, for whose skill as an amateur rider Gordon had a vast respect. The poet was always fond, in a shy sort of way, of children, and the young folks in the house found in him an ever-ready playmate. A little girl of Mr. Power's, then

aged five years, was a close companion of his, and could be seen at odd times of the day seated on the tall man's shoulder, carried around the garden, while grave converse was held betwixt them. One balmy afternoon in these lengthening spring days, as they sat together on a seat beneath a tree, the little girl asked him to gather her a bunch of flowers, and began to moralize in childish fashion about the poor blossoms that die when you pluck them; but then they die too if you don't pluck them, for the scorching weather comes and the flowers pass away. Hereupon the poet fell into a train of meditation, and, while the child played round about, he wrote on a scrap of paper the mournful lyric he called 'A Song of Autumn.'

"Where shall we go for our garlands glad,  
At the falling of the year,  
When the burnt-up banks are yellow and sad,  
When the boughs are yellow and sere?"

The lines close with a mournful prophecy, almost fulfilled:

"Girl, when the garlands of next year glow,  
You may gather again, my dear,  
But I go where the last year's lost leaves go,  
At the falling of the year."

The offer to train the steeplechaser Babbler for Major Baker was accompanied by an invitation from the officers of the 14th Regiment to be their guest for a time at the barracks on the St. Kilda Road. Adjutant Woodlands had become a great friend of Gordon's; and Major Baker, since then Sir Thomas

Baker, and one of the heroes of Candahar, had an immense respect for the manly, eccentric, chivalrous character of the poet. So among congenial society he passed the month of December 1868, talking horses and manly sports, with a great deal of good-humoured rivalry in feats of horsemanship, and odd half-hours with the boxing-gloves. Gordon was a man who loved both to hear and to tell anecdotes whether of the marvellous or of the humorous turn, and his laughter was loud and hearty when he was with a few, but a very few, in whose company he could feel fully at ease.

He took the clumsy Babbler to the Ballarat races on December 5, moderately sanguine of winning. The only competitor he feared was Union, whose rider, however, he hoped to defeat by superior skill and management. But it turned out that another horse, Ingleside, ridden by its owner, Mr. Orr, was to be the most formidable opponent. At the start, Gordon led off, but was much disconcerted when Babbler baulked at the first sod-wall. However, the horse was induced to go over not much behind the rest of the field, and pushed forward well into the crowd again. Then came two fences together, too near to make the second an easy obstacle. All the other horses wasted time in getting over this latter fence, but Gordon took Babbler across it neatly, and without the loss of a moment. Ingleside was then the only horse near him, and Mr. Orr made a strong effort to stride neck and neck. The rest of the field flogged in vain as pursuers of the runaway pair. Ingleside and Babbler shot onward side by side for a

while, then Babbler slowly prevailed, a head, a shoulder, a length in front, and ere they turned into the straight, Mr. Orr, seeing how easily and freshly Babbler seemed to go, while he felt his own horse swaying beneath him, pulled up in despair. Gordon soon after dropped down to a cool trot, and passed the winning-post with no other horse in sight behind him, the first of the followers just rounding the corner as the victor turned away amid a wild ovation on the part of the crowd, who recognized that the victory belonged to the man rather than to the beast. "Peeping Tom," then the chief racing writer in the Colony, declared that Babbler's success was owing to Gordon's excellent riding. "He was ridden very patiently throughout, and the horse still had plenty in him when he finished."

Hence it came that for the New Year's meeting in Melbourne Gordon had his choice of mounts for the steeplechase. Major Baker's Babbler, or Mr. Watson's Ballarat, or the prime little Viking, now fully owned by Mr. Robert Power, were all at his disposal, and each of them had been ridden by him to victory. He chose Viking, and the contest made a great sensation of the day among racing men. Once more the victory was secured by the skill of the rider, and that sympathy which, as Brunton Stephens says, a horse can easily feel through the pig-skin flaps. Viking led at the finish by several lengths.

This success put the poet steeplechaser in funds again, and he paid the interest due, though it was hopeless to think of paying off the mortgage. He

had been lucky enough to sell Maude for £90 to Mr. E. C. Moore, and again the notion possessed him that if he could only gather two or three hundred pounds, he would go off to Western Australia and take up land for sheep in some of the more promising districts he had seen while there. He was still pondering over these prospects, and waiting to learn at what date Mrs. Gordon proposed to return, when he had an invitation from Mr. Riddoch to spend the summer with his family at Yallum. Gordon had no racing engagements till the middle of February, and he accepted for a month. He took the train to Ballarat, and there picked up an old mare of his, named Fairy, which he had never sold. He rode this animal across the border, and soon, in the cheerful home circle of a family which he describes as having the happy mixture of simple tastes with cultured pursuits, he spent the last truly delightful month he was to know.

It was the most productive poetic time of his life. On his previous visit he had taken a whimsical fancy to a gnarled old gum-tree that stood in a sunny paddock a few hundred yards from the house. After breakfast he used to climb it, and sit in a natural arm-chair upon a crooked limb. There he would fill and smoke successive bowls of the old clay pipe, and those who were curious might see him from time to time jot down lines in pencil on a paper spread upon the branch or sometimes on his hat. He never had any thought upon the time, and when meals came round he generally had to be specially summoned, whereupon he

would slide down the trunk and apologize for causing delay.

It was here he wrote the 'Sick Stockrider,' though nearly a year passed ere he printed it. Seated on his gum-tree, he looked out over some of the localities mentioned in the poem, and thought of men who had inhabited the district in the "old colonial days," never again to return. It was here too, as probabilities suggest, that he recast, and perhaps rewrote, old verses of his that recounted a Warwickshire reminiscence of his youth. These were printed a month or two later in the *Australasian* under the title of 'How we Beat the Favourite,' but with no author's name. They attracted a widespread attention, and were the first of Gordon's poems that attained to anything like popularity.

The family at Yallum record that while the poet was in the evening always ready for a game or for general conversation in garden or verandah during the hot summer nights, yet he was often busy making clean copies of the verses he had jotted down by day. What were the remaining pieces then written we have now no means of identifying; but it is likely enough that among them were included 'From the Wreck,' and 'Wolf and Hound.'

The former was a reminiscence of his life in the Mount Gambier district. It was some years after he had left the police force, and was busy with horses, that the *Admella*, on August 6, 1859, struck the South Australian coast on a lonely spot. She kept together in spite of the wild seas that swept her decks. The crew and passengers were many days on board, all



hope of landing on the cliffs of the surf-smitten shore having been abandoned. One after another the unhappy people dropped into the savage commotion below, but two seamen succeeded in launching a small boat, in which, after fifty hours of despairing effort, they reached Cape Northumberland, and gave their message to the lighthouse-keeper. Word was passed on to the neighbouring station, and two of the hands were roused before daybreak to ride with the news to the nearest telegraph-station.

All readers of Gordon know the mad career that followed, through the wattle-rises, over the ranges, deep in the whirling creek, on, amid scrub and across the sheep country and its fences, till the heavier horse gave in, and the mare galloped forward alone. Still over rocks and woods and waste-land the ardent creature strode, till she began to reel, her crest and croup all covered with foam ; as she turned into the township her nostrils and eyes were bloodshot, and through the flaps the rider could feel the thump of her heart. Opposite the little church she gave

“A short, sidelong stagger, a long forward lurch,  
A slight choking sob, and the mare had gone down,”

never to rise again. I have no idea where to turn in all literature for a poem more admirable after its own kind. There is no sentimental pathos about it. Indeed its ending may not without reason be condemned for a cold cynicism which is the very opposite of sentiment. But the whole piece suggests a sort of manly pathos, that sort of deep feeling which is none the less effective because it is rigidly restrained,

and yet shows its strength by peeping forth in spite of its bonds.

Gordon had a steeplechase to ride in Melbourne at the middle of February, and he had to leave the quiet circle of Yallum for the strain and stress of his city life. He took the road by easy stages to Coleraine, and there in a paddock left Fairy and two horses of Riddoch's which he had brought over for the purpose. Then he took coach for Ballarat, and on the way wrote a set of verses not printed till after his death. When he left, February 14 was near at hand, and the children at Yallum had given him a valentine, decorated with a basket of flowers, asking him to fill in the blank page with verses, as they wished to send it to their aunt, Miss Lord. Between Scarsdale and Ballarat he jotted down the lines, always now printed in his works under the title 'A Basket of Flowers.'

He was in Melbourne in time to ride his race, which, however, was one of small consequence. He seems to have hoped that this might be his last. He would have preferred to earn a living any other way rather than among horses. At this time he writes: "I have at present not the least idea of what I am going to do; I have a straightforward offer from the *Australasian* to write for that paper. Perhaps I might thus make enough to live on; but at any rate I am awfully sick of the life I have been living and the society I have not been able to escape from."

The offer from the *Australasian* was that of sporting reporter; but it was a position that would

have taken him to every race-meeting in the country, to live in hotels, and to be thrown more than ever into the company of those who hang round racing-stables and betting-rooms. He knew that a weakness for stimulants was growing upon him, and he had to fight also against a tendency to use opiates in order to sleep at night. He distrusted himself, and refused the offer, hoping to find some means of earning a living which should be to him less perilous.

Meantime he had to ride a race when the chance came, while waiting for a suitable opening. On March 27, 1869, he once more bestrode the heavy Babbler, to oppose a field in which Ingleside and Ballarat were his chief opponents. The newspaper reports of the following Monday declare that Gordon only played with them during the early part of the race, and that whenever he pleased to put his horse to its best, he shot easily forward, and came in at the posts far ahead of all pursuers.

But he earned a little also as an occasional contributor to the papers, chiefly on sporting topics; and he now and again found a chance of making a few pounds in buying and selling horses. About the middle of 1869 his wife joined him again in Melbourne, but as he still had a strong hope of finding a suitable piece of land on which to settle, he resolved not to form a permanent home, but to look for temporary lodgings. As he had a great love for the sea, he chose furnished rooms in the house of a man named Kelly, who was gardener at that time to George Higinbotham, then living in Brighton.

The poet's new quarters were in Middle Brighton, a simple weather-board cottage, but the district was then less built over than it now is, and a bit of garden lay behind wherein he often sat and read. He had become slightly acquainted with Higinbotham, who had a singularly simple and unostentatious warmth of feeling that made him readily obliging in a multitude of little ways. Out of his excellent library he lent to Gordon, through the gardener, many a work which the bookless man greatly prized. In this way Gordon greatly enlarged his reading, especially of the poets, and made much fuller acquaintance with Browning and Swinburne. Mr. Kelly remembers how on a seat beneath some bushy shrubs the poet spent long hours in reading books, mostly borrowed from the barrister's library; for of his own he had only a tattered half-dozen on a shelf in the sitting-room. He describes them in one of his letters. "A 'Turf Register'; half of a religious work that came into my hands I don't know how; a dilapidated dictionary; 'David the Shepherd King,' with the author's compliments, which no one will borrow or steal; and a volume of my own verses, which I cannot get rid of."

Meantime he was steadily acquiring a local poetic fame. In the *Colonial Monthly* there had appeared his 'Sick Stockrider,' and that mournful wail which he entitled 'Doubtful Dreams.' The former piece was at once copied into the *Australasian*, and thence into many of the up-country journals, and achieved a decided popularity. He himself wrote soon after :

"These verses have made quite a stir in Melbourne, and have been spoken of with praise, but I don't think much of them myself."

It was perhaps a pity that, ere printing this poem, he yielded to the suggestion made by one of his acquaintances of the *Colonial Monthly* staff to omit the last verse from his manuscript copy. It originally ended thus :

"Enigmas that perplex us in the world's unequal strife,  
The future may ignore or may reveal ;  
Yet some as weak as water, Ned, to make the best of life,  
Have been to face its worst as true as steel."

This verse has been preserved for us by the good taste of Mr. J. J. Shillinglaw, who was present when the matter was discussed. There can be no doubt that it makes a less conclusive ending to the poem ; but Gordon's own instinct was right. As the piece ends now, it has a melodramatic ring ; its sentiment hovers dangerously near a suspicion of fudge, and the four lines that have been dropped out came as a corrective, restoring the stockrider, after his little outburst of girlish tenderness, not at all unnatural even in the rough bushman, to the strong impression of suffering manfulness with which the piece opens. But it is possible that the poet felt how in this last quatrain he is laying bare his own heart for critical inspection, and withdrew the lines which his own artistic taste would otherwise have retained.

He now began to have many literary acquaintances, and liked well to drop into the office of the

*Colonial Monthly*, where a medley conversation, with a literary undercurrent, but many a digression to sport or adventure, and many a laughter-punctuated discourse of the kind comprehensively termed "yarns," made the dingy walls of ink-stained plaster associated with scores of cheery reunions. But the company was to Gordon a little dangerous. It was a shrine not only of the Muses but also of Bacchus, and whilst the whirling tobacco-smoke made misty the air, the office-boy would be sent forth to the place at the corner, and oft as he returned, the tray in his hand and the jingle of glasses denoted how far removed the writer crew were from anything like a bigoted teetotalism.

Gordon was made a member of the newly-formed Yorick Club; and there increased his intimacy with McCrae and Telo, Shillinglaw and Marcus Clarke, and at a later date came to know also Henry Kendall. At this time he wrote all his letters from the club, and used to be a favourite there, by reason of his incisive talk, his gentlemanly ways, and his growing power as a poet. He was always felt to be eccentric, but singularly manly and considerate.

Meantime his life at Brighton was one of healthful simplicity. Every morning, summer or winter, he walked down to the beach for his plunge into the sea; he was a powerful swimmer, and, regardless of sharks, he would head half-a-mile out into the bay before thinking of turning back. When remonstrated with, on one occasion, for having gone so far

that he was all but spent ere he touched again a solid base, he answered that if death came without his actually seeking it, he at least would have no cause for complaint.

There can be no manner of doubt, that at this time the malady he had inherited from his mother was growing upon him. A settled melancholy haunted him day and night ; most of all by night in his long hours of wakefulness. From this he often roused himself, and then he was apt to exhibit gleams of a wild, hilarious mirth, never ungentlemanly, but sometimes loud and suggestive of a mind in ill-health.

He tried to fight his melancholia with plenty of exercise ; took long walks, and daring gallops. In the morning he exercised his horses, in the afternoon he walked into Melbourne, about eight miles, and often enough he walked back again. As a means of securing still more exercise, he joined the Brighton Artillery Corps, to which his landlord Kelly belonged. Not only did he enjoy the drill, but he became an enthusiast with the rifle, and spent long hours at the butts. But he never could have been a successful shot. His nearness of sight must have prevented even an ordinary efficiency.

So he lived a life of mingled reading and exercise, reticent seclusion and gleams of eager talkativeness, while the canker within deepened its hold, and he became more and more the victim of lassitude, gloom, and of a general distaste of life. And the fatalism he had long felt grew and grew with

daily increase, and questions long pondered, never solved, perplexed him, till he wrote:

“No man may shirk the allotted work,  
The deed to do, the death to die,  
And yet I wonder when I try  
To solve one question—May ? or Must ?  
And shall I solve it by and by  
Beyond the dark, beneath the dust ?  
I trust so, and I only trust.”



## CHAPTER VII

### HIS LAST DAYS

THAT barony of Esslemont, which his great-grandfather had bought a century before, and strictly entailed, in the hopes of founding a landed family, was the direct cause of Gordon's death in 1870. It was a fine estate, now worth two thousand a year, and had for a long time been in the possession of a Mr. Huntley Gordon, who, on his death, bequeathed it to his daughter, a certain Mrs. Wooldridge. If the entail was still valid this bequest was beyond his power, for none but male heirs, however remote, could succeed to it; and the Gordon family generally regarded the will as a piece of calm self-assertion on the part of the late owner. Nevertheless, the lady had occupied the estate for four years ere the poet heard anything of the matter. It was in October 1868, that his uncle, Hamilton Gordon, wrote to him advising him to assert his claim as being beyond all doubt the nearest male heir. The letter came as he was leaving Ballarat, but he built no hopes upon it. He wrote back in answer, that as the lady had held it so long, he would be disinclined to disturb her in possession; but he learnt, in reply, during the course

of 1869, that she was very wealthy without this estate, which was merely a little more for one who already had very much. Gordon then threw himself into the matter with some little zeal. Truly, for him an unfortunate thing as the matter turned out, for, to a mind entering on the downward course of melancholia, the utmost quietness and freedom from feverish excitement should have been prescribed. It was almost fatal at that time to enter on the frets, the perplexities, the restless exhilarations and the deep disappointments of litigation.

Gordon had in one regard no delusions. He did not believe that if he should gain the estate he would have long to live in its enjoyment. He had no son to inherit after him, and his wife could not succeed if the estate were truly entailed. But there were four years of accrued income due, and if he held the estate for only a few years he would be able to leave his wife well provided for at his decease. He accordingly asked the advice of George Higinbotham as to the most suitable firm of solicitors to whom he could refer the matter. He was told that as it was a case of Scottish law he had better apply to J. C. Stewart, of the firm of Malleson, England, and Stewart, who was the chief authority of that kind then in Melbourne. With the help of letters from relatives of the Gordon connection, Mr. Stewart stated a case to be submitted to a leading advocate in Edinburgh, one especially cognizant of the laws of entail.

Until this time Gordon refused to permit himself the luxury of day-dreams. He discouraged any

tendency to sanguine hopes; but in January 1870 there arrived news which gave him every just reason to anticipate a successful issue. The learned advocate had caused an exhaustive search to be conducted among the registers of Edinburgh, whereby it became clear that the entail had never been broken, nor, indeed, interfered with in any way. The opinion he gave distinctly declared that Gordon's case was sound, and that in all probability he had only to proceed to make the estate his own.

Gordon's letters now show a change of feeling. He is quite sure of success. "My title," he says, "seems clear enough. All that the other side have to go upon is an Act of 1848, which made entailed estates subject to the debt bonds of the holders. Stewart has gone over the papers and believes that they are wrong. However, the news by next mail ought to put the matter straight." The news by the next mail seemed altogether satisfactory, and Gordon had now to think of starting the necessary litigation.

That would require money, but when the matter seemed so sure he had no hesitation in borrowing the necessary sum for a time. He applied to Mr. Riddoch, and promptly received what he asked for. But it soon disappeared in preliminary expenses. Meanwhile his wife received news that her father was dying in South Australia; he had to provide money to take her round to see him. In a couple of months all he had borrowed was gone, and he was ashamed further to trespass on his friend's generosity. He now began to let his debts grow; paid his land-

lord in promises, and ran up bills at the local shops. He was so sure that in a very short time he should be able to pay everybody. "However," he says, "I take little personal comfort from the hopes of the property. It will come too late in the day to do me any good; and I am growing sick of everything. And, after all, having more money than you know what to do with may be only a little better than having none at all."

Yet, in order to raise a little ready cash for pocket-money, he accepted an offer to ride one last race. It was to be on Major Baker's big black horse Prince Rupert, on the afternoon of Saturday, March 12, 1870. Eleven horses were entered for this steeplechase at Flemington, among them Babbler, but Major Baker preferred to put Gordon on his new purchase, Prince Rupert. After the start two of the horses named Rocket and Skipper got away with a rush to the front, but Gordon brought Prince Rupert steadily up behind them, till at the sheds he had reached them. Then came up a fourth horse named Reindeer, while a fifth named Rondo also, by putting on a spurt, approached. At the first jump all five horses went neatly over, very nearly together; but at the second, Prince Rupert and Reindeer had the lead, and breasted the air side by side, while Skipper and a new-comer called Dutchman strode eagerly behind to share the lead. There was a log fence ahead, and as they all steered for this, Prince Rupert was a little in advance of the rest. But he took the leap too eagerly, and struck. Gordon was thrown over the horse's head, and fell in a dangerous way.

He jumped to his feet again, and was at once in the saddle. But the blow had been a serious one, and the unfortunate rider was seen to reel in his saddle. We know from his own account that he was quite dazed, and scarcely knew where he was or what was happening. And yet he recovered the lost ground, and led all the way past the abattoirs. Then the rider's skill was seen to leave him. He swayed heavily, and his hand lost its firmness. Dutchman and Reindeer gained, then Dutchman secured the lead. At the third and last fence, Prince Rupert fell, and again threw Gordon heavily. This time the horse got away, and the race lay then between Reindeer and Dutchman, which were by that time both sorely distressed. Dutchman in the end by a strenuous effort secured a painful victory.

Gordon was taken home to Brighton by his friend Blackmore, the Parliamentary librarian at Adelaide, who was round in Melbourne on a holiday. On the following Monday Major Baker drove him into town to see a doctor, and the verdict was serious. Internal injuries had taken place. These could be mended, but the much-battered head was not so likely to be fully repaired. He lay in bed five days, and then as he could neither sleep nor rest he rose again and went about his business; but in his letters written soon after he expresses a belief that he need have no hope of getting over the results of this last mishap. He began his old habit again of going into town in the afternoon.

About this time he began to see a good deal of Kendall. The two poets had nothing in common

save their taste for verse, yet they had a strong regard for each other. In one of his letters Gordon says of Kendall: "He is certainly the best poet out here. I think him better than Horne. A. C. Swinburne has sent him a most complimentary letter upon a work of his which went home; indeed, it is a sort of rhapsody." On the other hand, I have in my possession a letter of Kendall's addressed to friends in New South Wales, in which he considers Gordon's to be by far the strongest work yet done in Australia. So the two poets encouraged each other. They had one short period of estrangement, due to a misunderstanding, terminated by a manly letter and a set of humorous verses sent by Gordon to Kendall. Out of this literary brotherhood sprang up in the mind of Gordon a strong desire to get his remaining and certainly his best poems published before his death, which he thought not likely to be far away. In order to get leisure to work at his book in quietness he visited the den of one of those money-lenders who advertise that advances are made to those who are entitled to legacies or remittances from the old country. He obtained a small sum at the comparatively harmless rate of about 90 per cent. per annum. So he was able to keep afloat a little longer.

Cheered up by the receipt of one or two English reviews and papers containing favourable notices of 'Sea Spray and Smoke Drift,' he worked along at his book through all the month of May (1870), waiting impatiently for further news as to Esslemont. But the June mail, with one fatal touch, brought down the castles of his dreams. It had been all along

known that the Act of 1848 had abolished certain classes of entail, but every lawyer seemed to have taken it for granted that it in no way affected the barony of Esslemont. Now came the news that by a recent decision of the Scotch law courts, sustained by the Privy Council, it had been settled that the class of entail to which Esslemont belonged was included in the category, and had been swept away.

The matter was now settled beyond a hope, and Gordon was left stranded with his debts accumulated round him. In Brighton he owed about £100; he owed the money-lender £50; he would shortly have to pay £30 for his new book, then nearly printed, and he owed Mr. Riddoch £200. When the first stun was over, he set out to look for some remunerative work. He tramped the streets of Melbourne for two days in that useless frame of mind when a man has formed no definite idea as to what he is going to do, but is feebly ready to do anything that turns up. This is precisely the kind of applicant who fails to succeed, the man who is willing to do almost anything being only too well known in Melbourne. The two things which Gordon could do were to ride well and to write well. The former he wished to avoid, by reason both of health and of peace of mind. As for writing, he confesses in several of his letters that he had no faculty for prose, and felt at home only in verse. But few men anywhere can make a living by the writing of poetry, and most assuredly it was not then to be done in Melbourne.

For some years past Gordon's growing melancholy

had taken the form of brooding thoughts of self-destruction. Four or five times in his letters, even when most hopeful as to Esslemont, he had spoken as if, like a moth round a candle, he was hovering round death as a fascinating theme. At the beginning of the year he had written: "If I've been a great fool, I've gone through as much as I can bear. Indeed, had it not been for my wife I should have got out of my troubles somehow before this. You who are so differently constituted cannot, perhaps, understand how a man who has naturally been always very reckless feels when he gets into a hole, especially if he is also naturally vain. I find my head failing sometimes, and I am sure my wife would be better without me."

In the poem 'Argemone,' written for Miss Riddoch's album about a year before, he tells us that

"Men toiling and straining and striving  
Are glad peradventure for living.  
I render for life no thanksgiving,  
Glad only to die."

And this was a very general attitude of his in regard to life.

Meantime his book was nearing its completion, and on June 23, 1870, the modest five hundred copies were all struck off, a sufficient number being bound for issue. That morning he dropped into the office of the publishers, and obtained a definite statement of his liability to them. He carried away the account with a numb sense of hopelessness; and turned into Collins Street like one in a bitter dream. But, meeting Marcus Clarke, a few words of warm con-



gratulation led to a friendly glass, and Gordon went on his way cheered by the praise and by the stimulant, which always had an exhilarating effect upon him. During the forenoon he was shown a two-column critique which was to appear in next Saturday's *Australasian*. It was the work of Kendall, who had obtained a proof for correction. This article took bold ground; spoke of some of the poems as being of the kind in which Whyte Melville, on the one hand, and Charles Kingsley, on the other, chiefly excelled, but considered them undoubtedly superior to the work of either. Several of the poems were described as rivalling Swinburne on his own ground; and the romances were pronounced to be as good as any in the language, that of 'Britomarte' being awarded the most cordial praise.

Soon afterwards Gordon met Kendall in Collins Street. The warm grasp of the hand was meant to express all the gratitude which one man felt it awkward to express to the other in words. Gordon forgot all about his pecuniary troubles, and the two wandered into the Argus Hotel for a rest. They sat for a couple of hours, each glad to suppress the gnawing cares which sat like spectres in the murky background behind the little circle of present warmth and light. For both were miserably poor and unadapted to combat the practical difficulties of life.

Their talk was of literature, and of favourite poems, and of future themes and of stirring lines. It was by no means unnatural that a couple more of those cheering glasses should help in the warm glow of congenial topics to drown the fiend of

care, and when they parted at five o'clock Gordon's shattered head was suffering from the mingled excitement and potations. But in the Brighton train there was calmness enough for it all to come back again; the debts, the disgrace, the dreary outlook, and a furious headache raged in his brain. He joined his wife at tea, but was moodily silent. During the evening he lay in gloomy thought upon the horse-hair couch of the little sitting-room, but rose once to try if some new cartridges would fit the barrel of the rifle which he had in his room. He and his wife went early to bed.

Next morning the winter daybreak was scarcely perceptible when he rose and dressed himself quietly; he stooped to kiss his slumbering wife, who afterwards remembered only the consciousness of having felt her face swept by his long beard. Then he passed out into the grey street and down to the beach; the fishermen who saw him striding along the sands, with his rifle balanced in his hand, saluted him as he passed, but heard no cheery response such as was customary. He was never afterwards seen alive.

But about nine o'clock in the forenoon a man named Allen, while hunting up a cow that had gone astray, was riding among the scrub at the Picnic Point, when he saw a long form, clad in a velvet jacket, lying in a little open glade. He was riding past, thinking the man asleep, when by chance the open stare of the blue eyes startled him, and he hastily dismounted, only to discover that it was a still and rigid body, which lay there with white and

upturned face. The rifle rested with its muzzle on his breast, and beside it a forked branch of tea-tree with which, when the muzzle was in his mouth, he had contrived to push the trigger. Near him were melancholy proofs of his last meditative minutes. His soft felt hat lay with the brim uppermost, and in it were a shilling and his pipe. As he had sat with the wall of foliage concealing him all round, he had drawn a few last consoling whiffs from his old friend the black pipe, and mused upon the last of his coins. Apparently, whatever might have shaken his over-night resolution had dissolved before that melancholy token of financial bitterness, and he had hesitated no more, but stretched himself back for the fatal push. That instant all was over, for the bullet had passed through the brain, carrying out with it a piece of the skull, round as a shilling. Strange that on this very morning the booksellers were placing on their counters for sale the volume in which he had written :

“And crime has cause, nay never pause  
Idly to feel a pulseless wrist :  
And close those eyes, through film and mist,  
That keep the old defiant glare ;  
And answer, wise psychologist,  
Whose science claims some little share  
Of truth, what better things were there.”

A few friends followed his remains to their quiet resting-place in the Brighton cemetery. His wife returned to her people in South Australia, and soon took another mate, one whom she was better able to understand than the lofty but eccentric soul

whose body lay so long forgotten in the wild-looking little burial-place, till the charm of his poetry, increasingly felt, sent a few admirers to raise a memorial over the spot.

His verses have touched most deeply of all singers the chords of the Australian heart. It may well be that this is not wholly a national advantage, and that it were better for the youth of the land to be nurtured less on pessimism and fatalism. We can understand these feelings in Gordon's case, for he inherited a cast of thought in which constitutional gloom was broken into only by reckless moods of excitement and daring. But, even if a pessimistic philosophy should eventually be able to justify itself as an ultimate statement of fact, it is inconsistent with the biologic needs of life. Where health is, there ought to be a strong and bounding pulse of happiness. The middle-aged dyspeptic may cynically take stock of life and find there is nothing in it; far healthier, far better, when the sweet glamour of romance still dwells with us, when love seems the sum of joys, when the green earth and the cloud-flecked skies, the rustling woodland and the leaping furrows of the sea are full of zest. Gordon knows well the delights of the open air; of "God's glorious oxygen," and all the joys that come

"In the spring when the wattle gold trembles  
"Twixt shadow and shine,  
When each dew-laden air-draught resembles  
A long draught of wine."

But, as a rule, he takes a gloomy view of life:

"This has been, and this shall still be,  
Here, as there, in sun or star ;  
These things are to be and will be,  
Those things were to be and are."

To him life seems only

"A little season of love and laughter ;  
Of light and life, of pleasure and pain.  
A horror of outer darkness thereafter,  
And dust returneth to dust again."

And he asks :

"Is there aught worth losing or keeping,  
The bitter or sweets men quaff ;  
The sowing or doubtful reaping,  
The harvest of grain or chaff ;  
Of squandering days or heaping,  
Of waking seasons or sleeping ;  
The laughter that dries the weeping,  
Or the weeping that drowns the laugh ?"

But Ecclesiastes is not good for too frequent reading, and it will be well for the youth of Australia not to absorb too freely from Gordon a philosophy that saps the spring of action and distils into the sweetest draught of life those bitter drops that destroy its flavour.

Enough has been said of the life and experiences of Gordon to show that these things were natural with him, and that though he was sometimes eccentric he was never affected. What he felt he laboured accurately to express ; a ring of absolute sincerity resounds in all he wrote, and there are moods in all minds with which the gloomy vigour of his lines "most musical, most melancholy," seems

to accord in a sort of soothing sympathy such as the pensive Jaques might have felt in the forest of Ardennes, could the preacher of "All is vanity" have comforted him with a few lugubrious reflections.

But the youth of Australia may drink the full beauty of his poetry without subscribing to his philosophy. For while his poetry appeals to our experience of charms and emotions that are universal wherever men may dwell, his philosophy was the outcome of individual peculiarities, a want of mental balance, and a deficiency of that "prudent, cautious self-control" which Burns declares to be "wisdom's root." It was his own sad fate, and not the necessary conditions of life, which made him describe it thus :

"Towards the mist where the breakers moan,  
The rudderless bark is drifting,  
Through the shoals and the quicksands drifting ;  
In the end shall the night-rack lifting  
Discover the shores unknown."

His own private woes, not the verities of life, compelled him to exclaim :

"Let our dead loves and lives be forgotten  
With the ripening of fruits that are rotten,  
So we, loving fools dust-begotten,  
Go dustward again."

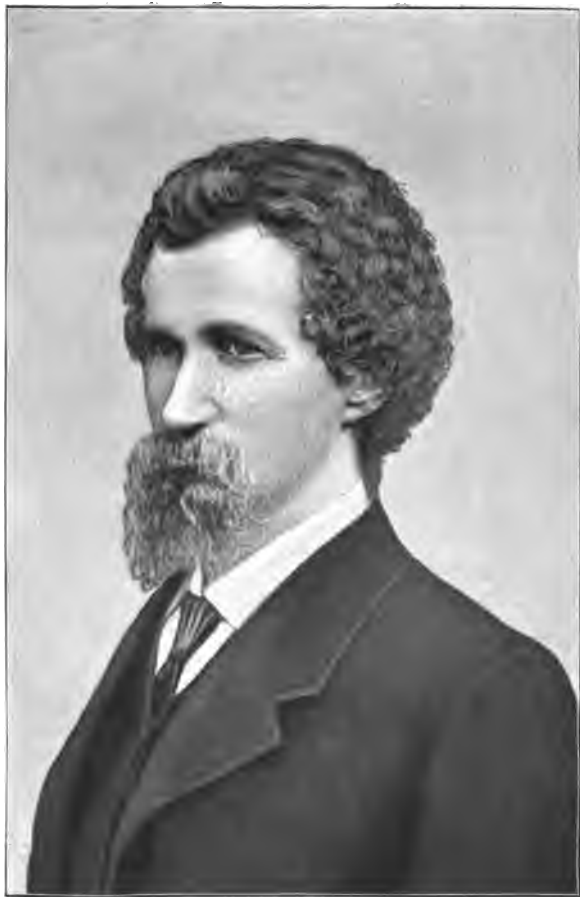
Those who are wise will seek and find in Gordon's poetry elements that are as healthful as these are morbid.

# HENRY CLARENCE KENDALL

## CHAPTER I

### HIS PARENTAGE

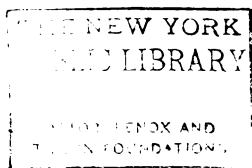
WHEN the present century began, New Zealand was to the civilized world a land of fascinating mystery. The Maoris, known chiefly through Captain Cook's voyages, awakened a wide sympathy, as a fearless, high-spirited, and intelligent people, sunk as yet in degrading practices, dark in their religion, fierce in their ways, cannibal in their tastes. When Marsden, the blacksmith chaplain of the convicts at Sydney, a good man full of zeal, after fourteen years of toil in Australia, went home to England on a brief holiday, he moved like a prophet in the religious circles of London, and, as the chief fruit of his fervour, stirred the Church Missionary Society to undertake the conversion of these interesting people. Much discussion ensued, the result of which was a new departure in mission work, the Society resolving to send out, first of all, men to teach these clever savages such arts and industries as would awaken their interest, while indirectly the Christian



*[To face page 238.]*

HENRY KENDALL AT THIRTY-FIVE.  
*Vowman Bros., Sydney.*





religion should be unfolded. When these had won a hold, this preliminary work should be followed up by clergymen whose business should be more directly the preaching which might lead to conversion.

Volunteers were called for, and a Lincolnshire school-master, who was subsequently ordained, Thomas Kendall by name, offered his services. So also Hall, a builder of houses, and King, a competent fisherman, all men of approved piety and of skill in their own departments, were chosen, and these, with Marsden, set sail in 1809 for Sydney. But when they landed, the news awaited them of the massacre of the *Boyd*, in which sixty-six people, crew and passengers, had been wantonly slain, and most of them eaten by the Maoris. Governor Macquarie refused to let the party proceed to these inhospitable shores, though Marsden and the missionaries themselves were eager to make trial. The Society at home took Macquarie's view, and forbade them to foolishly court disaster. For four years they remained in Sydney, the missionaries finding work in their various callings. But Marsden's fiery soul chafed at the delay. With his own money, and all he could borrow, he bought the *Active*, a brig of one hundred tons, in which Kendall and Hall sailed to reconnoitre, Kendall bearing from Macquarie a commission as the first magistrate of New Zealand, to keep order among the whalers and other seamen, mostly the scum of their profession, whose evil manners were contaminating the savages and giving rise to causes of retaliation. They were not only successful in making friends with the Maoris, but also brought back with

them the great chief Hongi, and his nephew Ruatara, on a visit to Sydney.

Under their promises of help and protection, the missionaries, in November 1814, twenty-five souls in all, with houses, cattle, and implements, set sail for the Bay of Islands, where an area of two hundred acres was speedily bought, and half an acre securely fenced, wherein arose the houses, clustered round a pole that carried the mission flag, white, adorned with cross and dove, and the words "Good Tidings." Kendall brought with him a large family, and here his sons, Basil, the father of the poet, and Joseph, sported away their early childhood amid the strange scenes of a new and eerie world. Here also were born Edward, John, Samuel, and Lawrence, with several daughters. The awful devilry of savage life all but drove away the missionaries in 1819, and their work, without sign of apparent hope, disheartened them. Moreover, the inexpressible profligacy and depravity of the seamen who frequented the Bay of Islands for water, provisions, and lust, sickened their hearts and made them despair of any possible influence for good to be acquired by white men. Fortunately, however, some of them held on. But Kendall was not among the number. In 1820 he paid a visit to England, taking with him Hongi, Waikato, and other chiefs, who, being for a season the lions of London society, helped to arouse enthusiasm, to secure a more numerous body of missionaries, and, in short, to commence on an adequate scale that missionary effort which was subsequently to be so successful. King remained

for forty years at his post, dying in harness; how long Hall remained I have never learnt, but Kendall seems never to have returned after his visit to London. He went to Chili, where he was for three years the Protestant chaplain to the Government. Here his son Basil joined for a time the Chilian fleet, then under the command of the daring and eccentric Lord Dundonald. For several years the lad fought as a junior officer in the war of the revolution against Spain, and witnessed the liberation of Chili. When Lord Dundonald had been publicly thanked, and had departed to help the Brazilians, Basil Kendall appears to have gone with him and seen some fighting also in that service. But in 1827, when Dundonald's restless spirit took him off to fight for the liberty of Greece against the Turks, the young man, then some three or four and twenty, returned to New South Wales to share the fortunes of the family.

Meantime the father, in recognition of his missionary services, had received from Governor Darling a grant of 1280 acres in the beautiful district of Ulladulla, then for the first time being opened up for human settlement. It lies on a charming part of the New South Wales coast towards the south, and is enclosed between the sea and the forest-clad coast ranges, in whose gullies grew many fine kinds of timber, and especially cedar, the trade in which was then beginning to grow profitable. Thomas Kendall engaged in it, along with his sons; he bought a small vessel, of which he seems himself to have been skipper. Some ten

or twelve years later, in wild weather, she went ashore on a beach near the mouth of the Shoalhaven river, and all on board were lost.

The old man having died intestate, his property, according to the law of the times, went to his eldest son Thomas, who had been the last to come to Australia. The second son, Basil, had meanwhile settled in Sydney, at first in the employment of a miller in that city. He was a tall man of gentlemanly manners, and with much more than average education, bright and genial, but unstable in all his ways; and he had the misfortune to mate with one who was too like himself to be the best of possible matches. Had the pretty and fascinating Miss Melinda Ann McNally been as well endowed with good sound common-sense as she was with good looks and Hibernian gaiety of spirits, she might have added the ballast which Basil Kendall sadly needed to carry him safely through the winds and waves of life. But she was as flighty and thoughtless as himself, and the marriage of the two was a matter lightly entered upon and after only the slenderest acquaintance.

Melinda McNally was the grand-daughter of that Leonard McNally who in the early part of this century was so popular in Ireland, more popular perhaps than any man then living, though his name is now so little known, rather because notorious than because distinguished.

He was one of that band of young Irish wits who, about the year 1780, gathered in London to push their fortune. The author of a score of successful

plays, editor of an influential newspaper, a barrister of recognized learning and eloquence, compiler of a subsequently well-known legal text-book, he had abundant prospects of success, when he suddenly threw them up, and returned to his beloved Dublin. There he rapidly gathered a large practice, became the intimate friend of Curran and Grattan, and an immense favourite with the people. At his hospitable table all who were brightest and wittiest among the patriotic Irishmen began to gather. But in an evil hour for him he was drawn into the whirlpool of rebellious agitation. Round his table the United Irishmen met to talk and plan all manner of treason. The good-nature of his broad and rosy face, the singular wisdom and luminousness of his conversation, his shrewd wit, and his unvarying kindness, had to atone for a dirty slovenliness of person and a certain shiftiness of principle which were a serious set-off to his finer qualities. For a year or more the United Irishmen hatched their plans at his table, when the Government turned its attention to him. He grew frightened, tried to discover how much had been revealed that would incriminate him, and thereby exposed himself unnecessarily. He was threatened with prosecution unless he gave all information in his power. In a moment of weakness, he told all he knew, and thenceforward was kept with a cruel rigour hard up to the line he had thus chosen. Outwardly he was the confidential legal adviser of the rebels, their chosen advocate in all their trials, a declaimer in all quiet meetings of Irishmen against the Govern-

ment, his mercurial tongue delighting the people and their leaders, so that Curran, after having known him for forty-three years, spoke of him as a man of "uncompromising and romantic fidelity"; yet all the time, once a fortnight or so, he was supplying the Government with secret information as to all that was being done or planned. Lecky has unearthed a hundred and fifty of his perfidious letters now lying in Dublin Castle. Yet this candid historian admits that, alongside of his prolonged treachery, there is a genuine native kindness pervading all the correspondence. The writer reveals the plots, but in general conceals the names of persons, and instead of currying favour with his employers in true informer fashion by urging them to extremes, he pleads for mitigation and toleration to men whom he describes as honest though misguided.

McNally, figuring as the friend of the rebels, lost his certain chance of a judgeship; all Government work had, of course, to be refused him, and the wealthier classes declined to give their briefs to one so deeply compromised. He was kept busy as the advocate of prosecuted men, from whom he received little or nothing by way of fees. At first the English Government thought it enough reward for his services that he remained unchanged, but eventually, in consideration of his poverty, his debts, and the despairing letters in which he pleaded the claims of his large family, a pension for life of £300 a year from the secret service fund was granted to him.

One of the sons for whom so eloquently, but so

meanly, he had pled, drifted not unnaturally out to Sydney, and it was his daughter, the charming but flighty Melinda, that Basil Kendall so precipitately married.

He opened a small retail shop for flour and produce in Market Street, Sydney, but whether for want of capital or by reason of business incapacity, the venture was of short duration. After a gay and probably thoughtless honeymoon the youthful pair awoke to a prospect of uncertainty and debt. But they awoke to worse than that.

These are things that may be met and conquered in a manful struggle, but ere many months had passed Basil Kendall woke also to the knowledge that even then his wife was the unfortunate victim of a thirst for stimulants. He was himself not overstable in that respect, and decided to withdraw from the city temptations to the quiet safety of a country life. And so it came that he returned to the Ulladulla district, where he obtained from his brother Thomas the use of a few hundred acres which he set to work to turn into a farm. This place, known as Kirmington, lies some two miles from the little township of Milton. Here, on a grassy knoll in the midst of a paddock bounded by the Shoalhaven Road, Basil Kendall built a slab hut for his young wife and her expected family. The place is long since gone; not a vestige of it remains, but a stunted willow marks where once was the little bush-garden.

Here, on April 18, 1841, there were born twin sons, one of whom, named Henry Clarence Kendall,



a frail little creature, was destined to the sad inheritance of the brains yet the failings of both his parents. Here, for five years, during which a sister joined them, they wandered in and out, no doubt happily unconscious of the squalor in the earth-floored hut, of the deepening cough wherewith, as slow midnights passed over, the father shook its frail walls, and of the ever more frequently smuggled black bottle which the mother brought from the publican two miles off. The people of the district were then, with few exceptions, emancipated convicts, with whom the luckless family, whatever their failings, were little likely to seek much intimacy. On the other hand, Basil's two younger brothers, Edward and John, who dwelt in the district, found little to attract them in the ill-regulated home, and the children spent these early impressionable years in the utmost isolation.

But nature lay there in a guise of extremest loveliness, the Ulladulla district being one of the beauty spots of Australia. Before their home, invisible, yet faintly audible on a night of storm, lay the great Pacific, easily reached, and glorious to behold. Beyond a doubt the childish eyes of Henry Kendall many times wonderingly watched those long caves of crystal that advanced from the sunny ocean, with their surf-white riding on top, till they overbalanced and flung themselves in hissing leagues upon the beach.

Behind the house there rose the stately hills, two thousand feet high, wooded to the summit with dark glades of cedar and sycamore, and scarred deep with

clefts and gullies where, beneath shades of cabbage-palm and flame-tree and trailing vines, the sweet little streams of Kendall's early verses babbled over fallen ferns and mossy boulders.

At five years old he was beginning, as we have reason to surmise from his writings, to be deeply though unreasoningly touched by the beauty around him, when the family removed to the Clarence river. Basil Kendall's health was failing, and the task of making a living out of a farm that was still in the rough was beyond his strength. On a little station out in the bush the invalid father made a struggle to secure a living; but soon the utmost he was fit for was to gather his boys around his feeble knees and give some thought to their growing need of education. The little fellow Henry was the object of his earliest and most especial care. - When at last the father was able to do no more than crawl out into the sunshine or crowd close in to the fire, the boy sat by his side, an affectionate companion, holding his hand and listening to the history of bygone ages; the myths of Greece, the exploits of Rome, the glories of England. Some little attempt was made at more systematic education; but the lad was barely eleven when his father became too far spent to be able to leave his bed. Here the boys tended him, assisted only in fitful turns by their mother. One winter evening he grew manifestly worse. He told his two eldest lads they had better hurry to the township for the doctor. As they were leaving he called them back. "Henry, hide that bottle," he said, pointing to the mournful cause of

the family misery, and ere the little lads departed they made all seemly for the eyes of a stranger. It was a long and eerie journey, and the night was far advanced when they returned with the physician. There upon the bed lay the thin and chilly face of the dead father, and by his side a huddled heap, the equally unconscious mother.

In the morning neighbours brought the little family their food, and made all needful arrangements for the burial of the father. A trifle was raised by the sale of his slender belongings, and Thomas Kendall, the eldest brother of Basil, sold some two hundred and fifty acres of his land, in order that the proceeds might be used for the support and education of the unhappy children, five in number, whom it was impossible to leave in the care of their own mother. They were divided out among friends and relatives. Henry was at this time a thin and nervous-looking boy of eleven, shy, solitary, and morbidly self-conscious. It is uncertain how he filled the next year or two of his life; some of his surviving relatives assert that he found a home with his uncle Edward at Ulladulla, but that gentleman is absolutely certain that he never returned to Ulladulla after his infancy.

Probably the boy, like the rest of the orphans, found a home, now here, now there, in the Clarence district; and doubtless he was, one way or other, left a good deal to himself. We can fancy him in his twelfth year spending much of his time in solitary rambles, or long trips with his twin brother up the valley of the Clarence river, or over a few

miles to the flats where the Orara's waters murmur onward to join the main stream. In the days of sadness and sordid cares that filled the evening of his life, he seems to have looked back with a deep regretful yearning to those scenes of his lonely boyhood, and all the streams of its devotion are enshrined in his verses. Two whole poems are devoted to the Orara, as seen to the idealizing fancy of the grey-haired man.

“The air is full of mellow sounds,  
The wet hill-heads are bright,  
And down the fall of fragrant grounds  
The deep ways flame with light.  
A rose-red space of stream I see,  
Past banks of tender fern ;  
A radiant brook, unknown to me  
Beyond its upper turn.

The singing silver-life I hear,  
Whose home is in the green  
Far-folded woods of fountains clear  
Where I have never been.  
Ah, brook above the upper bend,  
I often long to stand  
Where you in soft, cool shades descend  
From the untrodden land !”

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY LIFE

HIS thirteenth year being sped, and a little schooling accomplished, Henry Kendall was considered ready for a calling. He had none of the roving disposition of his father, nor the slightest possible inclination to the seaman's life, but his uncle Joseph was captain and owner of a small brig of one hundred and thirty-three tons, named the *Plumstead*; and, as he was willing to take the boy, it seemed a matter of small concern to his friends what were the little fellow's tastes; he was shipped off as cabin-boy, to be kicked about and cuffed for a couple of years at the whim of a rough set of sailors. For there are hints which lead us to guess that his uncle was free from any sentimental softness such as might have given to his nephew an indulgence not shown to other lads. He himself had started from the bottom; consider what he now was; could it really be a bad thing for an idle monkey to taste a rope's-end while still in process of being licked into shape?

Thus, while Australia was full of the early gold excitement of 1854 and 1855, the boy Kendall was

away on his two long years of seafaring life. The brig *Plumstead* was supposed to be a whaler, but she captured whales only when fortune favoured her. Otherwise she took a cargo wherever she could get it, and these two years were a general cruise up and down the Pacific. The lad thus saw Samoa and the Marquesas, touched at Yokohama, and in many lands strange prospects must have flitted before his eyes such as, under more favourable circumstances, ought to have fired his imagination. But to him it was a time of misery. Weak, slender, and of studious disposition, the rude, sordid life of galley-fires, tar-pots, and wretched fore-castle, the tyranny of Jack aboard and his drunken orgies upon land, must have been utterly discordant with his disposition.

In November 1856 the vessel's wanderings brought her to Mauritius, where she loaded at Port Louis with sugar for Melbourne, and a couple of days before New Year she cast anchor off Port Melbourne. The following three months were spent in idleness while the brig waited in vain for a cargo; the future poet we may image to ourselves as a wistful lad spending long days dreaming over the bulwarks and longing for some change, no matter what. In March 1857 the brig sailed for Sydney in ballast, and glad was he at heart to set foot once more on land and leave the sea and its uncongenial experience behind him.

A boy of fifteen, cast on the streets of Sydney to sink or swim for himself, he sought and obtained a situation as messenger and generally useful lad in

a draper's shop in Pitt Street, where he remained for a year or more. In spite of all his uncongenial surroundings he had nourished an inborn love for verse, and an unquenchable ardour for distinction as a poet. He tried his hand at a few lines, and sent them to a temperance paper then (1857) published in Sydney. They were accepted and printed, to the extravagant delight of the lonely lad. Then he tried others, which he sent to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, in which they were published. They attracted a little attention, and some of his father's friends in the Clarence district found for him a position with more prospect of advancement, at Grafton, where he became office-boy to a well-known solicitor of the district. This was James Lionel Michael, not only a genial fellow but a capable poet, an early friend, and still a correspondent of Millais, Ruskin, and most of the pre-Raphaelite brethren. He had lost, some time before, a wife to whom he had been devotedly attached, and now was living bachelor fashion in a house surrounded by a pretty garden, and enriched within by a choice little library of English, French, German, and Spanish literature. It was a free-and-easy household, and Michael was no conventional employer. He treated as a younger brother the lad who kept his office for him. His business was by no means extensive, and Michael would desert it at any time to talk poetry and whimsical philosophy.

It so happened that the very year 1857, in which Kendall joined him, he was preparing for the press his lyrical volume entitled 'Songs without Music,'

and it is very probable that some part of the lad's early occupation may have been to copy out his employer's verses for the printer. Proof-slips must have been familiar, and as Kendall practically lived with his employer, he was no doubt initiated into many discussions of rhythm and rhyme. Michael's book is one of melodious cadence and pretty sentiment. It is in part constructed on the model of Tom Moore, but is not without characteristic notes of its own. It formed in turn the model for Kendall's early work, some of his verses echoing very closely the lines of the older poet.

No sooner was this volume through the press than Michael started a long poem which he entitled 'John Cumberland,' a desultory, semi-autobiographical production, beginning with eccentric imitations of 'Faust,' and proceeding with strange intermingling of bold, though rhythmic prose, wild rhapsodies, and touching passages of true poetry. In the friendly offhand intimacy of the place, Kendall, no doubt, heard much of this extensive production, second longest among poems of Australasian birth; and the life thus led must have fired his young poetic enthusiasm.

But Michael did far more for the lad than all this implied. He encouraged him to read, and gave him the best poets of the English language with which to form his taste. Kendall never took with any thorough relish to the old Elizabethan writers, nor yet to Milton. He formed a poor opinion of Dryden and Pope. But at this period he filled his fancy full with the work of Shelley, Mrs. Browning, and Tennyson.



Michael encouraged him to learn French, and he read enough of Béranger and Victor Hugo to be able greatly to prefer the latter.

Meantime his own poetic aspirations were still growing, and he furtively despatched various pieces to the journals of Sydney, wherein they sometimes appeared in all the startling flattery of print. Then he tried the poet's corner of the *Sydney Empire*, owned and edited by Henry Parkes, who not only inserted the verses, but after two or three acceptances of that sort, inquired after their author. Parkes himself had poetic hopes. Twenty years before, he had weakly perpetrated his 'Stolen Moments,' and he was even at this time but two or three years distant from the publication of his ambitious 'Murmurs of the Stream.' It speaks well for the kindly patriotism with which the hard-worked and financially-troubled editor then glowed, that he was on the watch for the appearance of the first genuinely Australian poet, to help him and encourage his feet to the front.

Now it so happened that Michael was a great friend of N. D. Stenhouse, the recognized patron of literature in the Sydney of those times. Stenhouse was a practising lawyer, well-to-do, and liberal. Though no writer himself, he was a passionate lover of letters; a friend of Sir William Hamilton and Thomas de Quincey; a fine scholar, a man of cultured taste, possessor of a magnificent library, one of the founders of the Sydney Free Library and President of the School of Arts. To him the youthful Kendall on a trip to Sydney bore a letter of

introduction from Michael. The old man took a genial interest in the lad, introduced him to Harpur, then the only true poet of Australia, and to Deniehy, most interesting of its prose writers. He introduced him likewise to Dr. Woolley, the principal of Sydney University, and it was probably through Stenhouse that Parkes met in the flesh the young contributor whom he already slightly knew by correspondence.

There can be no doubt that the two or three years spent with J. L. Michael formed Kendall's true period of education, and the poet's future might have had less of failure and of melancholy in it could the connection have been longer continued. But one night Michael was missed from his home; a search in the morning revealed his body floating in the Clarence river, with a wound above the temple that penetrated through the skull. By some it was maintained that he had terminated his own life, but the evidence seemed equally to show that he had been the victim of foul play. The mystery has never to this day been cleared up.

A great deal was made at the inquest out of a poem that Michael had written, some three months before, in which a deep weariness of life was expressed; but that is a frequent mood with men of genius, and the poet readily expresses his passing feelings, though not necessarily with the intention of being swayed by them to any definite action. But as far as Kendall was concerned, whatever was the manner of Michael's exit on that dark night, a kind friend, a full-minded instructor, a generous encourager of poetic aspirations was gone. Let us trust he

was buried as in his 'Songs without Music' he desired :

"Where dappled sunshine spots the grass  
Pleasant to view ;  
And to the tomb the long rays pass  
The green leaves through ;  
And song-birds clustered overhead  
Make music sweet about my bed,  
Year after year."

Michael's business came to an end, and with it terminated Kendall's connection with the law. He had again to make efforts in order to obtain a situation, and he found one with a storekeeper at Scone, a township most romantically situated in the Hunter River district, upon one of the upper tributaries of the main stream. We have absolutely no record of the manner of his life in that period of his experience. If his hours were not too long, we can readily imagine the district itself to have been congenial. For Scone lies only ten miles away from Wingen, the burning mountain; it nestles among the wild spurs of the Liverpool Ranges, and its valleys are full of singing streamlets, while a walk of only a mile from the township would bring the youth to the magnificent scenery of the Flat Rock region.

All this was of no small moment in the early life of him who was to be the best and, so far as our history yet goes, the truest depicter of Australian scenery. His two years of seafaring misery, in spite of its panorama of novelties, has left little or no impress on his poetic work, but Ulladulla, the Clarence, the Orara, and no doubt Scone also had

much to do in moulding his nature and giving character to his work.

Yet in spite of an active love of nature, such as in later years bade him declare that one slender bush-blossom was to him worth a whole conservatory of gorgeous blooms, he was also of a bookish nature, and felt most keenly the want of the resources offered him in Michael's library.

His trip to Sydney some three or four years previously had introduced him to many friends who were willing and able to help him, but to none more zealous than Henry Halloran, then Secretary to the Surveyor-General's Department; who, recognizing the lad's ability, had at that time suggested in a distant way the possibility of his finding entrance to the Civil Service. Kendall had wisely preferred the opening which Michael's office had offered, but now, when fretting a little under the hopelessness of continuing his reading, he wrote to Halloran, inquiring if it was still possible that a position could be obtained. The reply was that no actual vacancy existed, but that if he chose to come to Sydney he might easily find a certain amount of employment in deed-engrossing for the office, until something more permanent could be found.

And so, at the age of twenty, he was back in Sydney, making an income by engrossing deeds at so much a folio. Halloran meanwhile was using his influence with the Premier, Sir John Robertson, to secure for the youth a less precarious employment, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing in the newspapers an announcement that the Ministry, in

recognition of literary promise, had appointed Henry Clarence Kendall to a vacancy in the Lands Office.

He now formed a home in Sydney, into which he gathered his sisters and his mother. It was not a haven of domestic felicity, but it satisfied a sense of duty. The Civil Service seemed for a long time an agreeable life to Kendall, whose superior officers of that date report that he was capable and industrious; that he applied a strenuous mind to his duties, and was one of those who required little supervision, as he formed a clear conception of what was wanted, and proceeded to do it in an intelligent way. But he was far from popular with his fellow-clerks. He was uncommunicative, mixed little with the others, looked down with contempt on the athletic sports, the races, the billiards, the flirtations which formed the staple conversation of their leisure. All his life long Kendall had a contempt for the theatre, detested dancing, was indifferent to music, and impatient of novels. There can be little wonder then that his comrades in the office voted him a dry stick, and imputed to him a tendency, which most probably he never possessed, to look a little superciliously on his fellow-creatures.

But the short hours of the Civil Service were a blessing to him. His work was over every day by four o'clock. He had time for a long walk before his dinner, and he had his evenings absolutely unbroken in which to pursue his studies. He began to take lessons in French, in order to continue the course which he had commenced with Michael; and he joined some evening classes at the School of Arts in

Pitt Street. An introduction to the eminently genial and scholarly Dr. Woolley, then principal of the Sydney University, was of the greatest possible advantage to him, for there was at that time no Public Library in Sydney, and the kindly doctor did a great service to the young poet by securing for him an entry whenever he liked into the University Library.

Under all these more favourable circumstances, Kendall began to write his verses more frequently. His taste was not yet well formed, being moulded a good deal in the school of Edgar Allan Poe, a manner of verse in which the sweetness soon surfeits, the sickly wailing soon irritates, and the want of anything definite to be said by the youthful aspirant who yearns to say something, soon alienates the sympathy of the more robust order of readers.

But while this was the character of much that he wrote, and while it is true that nothing that he composed then, or at any time, is marked by much virility, yet even in his twenty-first year he now and then struck a note that had the power to arrest attention, a note of unmistakable originality. These appeared from week to week in the local press, chiefly in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and in a mild way made occasionally the talk of the town.

The slight success thus achieved induced him to collect his forty-five most notable pieces into a small volume, which he published in 1862, under the title of 'Songs and Poems.' Clarke and Co. of Sydney were the publishers, but the book had also the name of Sampson Low and Marston, in the hopes, no doubt,

of securing for it a London sale. Of its forty-five poems at least thirty may be dismissed as immature and insincere, the work of a mere tyro, of which the poet himself was heartily ashamed within five years of their publication. But there are some half-dozen which command attention, and deserve our respect. His 'Ghost Glen,' with its German diablerie, is a remarkable piece of work for a lad. I cannot find a fellow to it in its own particular line within the English language. Not that it is by any means of the highest class, but of its kind it is truly poetical, and works with strong effect on the emotions of the reader. The 'Song of the Cattle Hunters,' though an echo of Michael, has long been a popular favourite, and the 'Fate of the Explorers' is an impressive rendering of the story of Burke and Wills, who that very year had died on the banks of Cooper's Creek.

With so many friends to help it, the book made a nine days' wonder. Not that this implies pecuniary success. Some five hundred copies were printed, but though these were all eventually sold, when trade allowances are deducted, the receipts for so small an edition can never at a reasonable price be made to cover the cost. The venture gave the young author a certain standing; but with the general public Kendall died out of notice in very brief time. He was assured by others, and himself felt certain, that an Australian reputation could be acquired only by securing a standing with the critics in England. Accordingly he made up a parcel of one of his books, and a number of more recent poems in manuscript, and with a touching letter full of

boyish ambition forwarded the whole to the editor of the *Athenæum*. Nineteen appeals out of twenty under these circumstances would have passed without notice. But the editor made use of the incident for an article, in which the youthful aspirant received no niggardly praise. Three of his poems were quoted in full, with a prophecy of future excellence. Another encouragement came in 1866 with the publication of Mr. G. B. Barton's 'Poets and Prose Writers of New South Wales'; that capable critic, after reviewing all the work done in the Colony, asserted that "the lyrics Kendall has written are by far the finest yet produced in Australia."

Thus, not without cheering words from the select few, he went on his way with his studies and his hopes, which at this time were no doubt what his friend Henry Halloran described them to be :

"He cared not for the theme, the single aim  
Stirring his heart was that his name should be  
Among his countrymen a household name,  
Though he were buried on some sunny lea."

Meantime, he had received promotion in the service; for in 1866, when Martin's Ministry came into power, Henry Parkes was the Colonial Secretary of the new Cabinet, and, mindful of his former hopes for young Kendall, he secured for him promotion to the first good vacancy that occurred in the Colonial Secretary's office. There is much to be said against this class of patronage, and if any one urges that it is a bad system, I shall not defend it. But



in this case it offered a chance to a man of some genius. This was the happy time of Kendall's life, an oasis between the desert of a lonely boyhood left behind, and the desert of a remorseful manhood still to come. Yet even then there are evidences that he was passing through a stage of religious uncertainty, that he regretted the disintegration of the creed of earlier days :

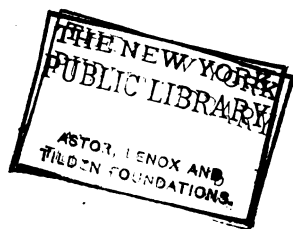
“By sleepless nights and vigils lone and long,  
And many a woeful wraith of wrestling prayers.”

There was a deep, solemn, religious basis in his mind, and at this time he wrote :

“Have trust in Him. Not in an old man throned  
With thunders on an everlasting cloud,  
But in that awful entity enzoned  
By no wild wraths, nor bitter homage loud.”

In a poem published in September 1864 in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, we see that a somewhat painful struggle had been taking place in his mind. Moreover, it gives evidence that he somewhat disliked the life of the city, and longed for “the weird ways of the forest home.” It is a strain which constantly recurs in his verses up to 1867, that “Cities soil the life with rust.” For, though he was happier now than ever before, material comforts by no means made him forget the joys of forest and stream-concealing gully :

“You know I left my forest home full loth,  
And those weird ways I knew so well and long,  
Dishevelled with their sloping sidelong growth  
Of twisted thorn and kurrijong.





[To face page 263.]

HENRY KENDALL AT TWENTY-FIVE.

*From a Photograph in the possession of the late Henry Halloran, C.M.G.*

It seems to me, my friend, and this wild thought  
Of all wild thoughts doth chiefly make me bleed,  
That in those hills and valleys, wonder-fraught,  
I loved and lost a noble creed.

For now my soul goes drifting back again,  
Aye, drifting, drifting like the silent snow,  
While scattered sheddings in a fall of rain  
Revive the dear lost Long Ago.

The time I, loitering by untrodden fens,  
Intent upon low-hanging, lustrous skies,  
Heard mellowed psalms from sounding southern glens,  
Euroma, dear to dreaming eyes."

But now a whole new world of thoughts and experiences came to divert his attention. He had not passed to the age of six-and-twenty without some stirrings at the sight of beauty, but the only impression as yet felt had been evanescent. In 1867 he was smitten with a much more ardent affection. He had been asked to lecture at the School of Arts, in Pitt Street, and had chosen for his theme the very ancient one of "Love, Courtship, Marriage." He had an audience of moderate size, before whom he stood, a spare and shyly-awkward man, in a black frock-coat too large and too loose for him, nervously fingering his manuscript, and pouring forth his words in a rhapsodical flow, to be seen, not heard. But the pale and beardless face was then one full of interest—a pleasant mouth, a clear, grey eye, deepening with enthusiasm to blue, a broad capacious forehead, and a crisp and curly mass of hair, made a striking figure, though on a bare platform and in a coldly empty hall.

At the close of the lecture a young friend named Rutter introduced him to his second sister, Charlotte, a bright, vivacious, good-looking girl. Kendall joined the party when the Rutter family started to walk across Hyde Park to the house of their father, who was a well-known doctor, practising in Bourke Street, Woollomooloo. Young Rutter had another sister with him, and an acquaintance or two filled up the set, which so divided that Kendall walked all the way under a starlit night with Miss Charlotte Rutter, and as a fitting sequel to the enthusiasm of his lecture, he fell straightway into an ardent love affair. He was of course easily persuaded to enter the house for an hour, and for the next year and a half he was a frequent visitor at that home, wherein a certain light-hearted, half-irresponsible gaiety mingled with much family devotion to form an atmosphere which had entered but little into the young poet's experience, and contrasted painfully with the social climate of his own home. Among absolutely congenial surroundings, Kendall shone in conversation, and what with the natural satisfaction of shining in company, and the elation of a time of young affections, subsequently also with the glad excitement of choosing and beautifying the home of early wedded years, his eight-and-twentieth summer was a time of utmost happiness. The cottage was pleasantly chosen in the Glebe and a very cosy home he was able to make it, as his position in the Civil Service was steadily improving. Hither, in the middle of 1868, he brought his bride, and life presented for both of them its rosiest of promises. He was

devoted to his wife, and though he was yet to cause her much misery, a constantly recurring note in his subsequent poetry is that of admiration, and gratefulness to the wife who never lost patience or relaxed in tenderness. To her he dedicated his next book of poems in lines that are manly yet touching, gentle yet sincere :

“To her who, cast with me in trying days,  
Stood in the place of health, and power, and praise :—  
Who, when I thought all light was out, became  
A lamp of hope that put my fears to shame :—  
Who faced for love’s sole sake the life austere  
That waits upon the man of letters here :—  
Who, unawares, her deep affection showed,  
By many a touching little wifely mode :—  
Whose spirit, self-denying, dear, divine,  
Its sorrows hid so it might lessen mine :—  
To her, my bright best friend, I dedicate  
This book of songs. ’Twill help to compensate  
For much neglect. The act if not the rhyme  
Will touch her heart, and lead her to the time  
Of trials past. That which is most intense  
Within these leaves is of her influence :  
And if aught here is sweetened by a tone  
Sincere, like love, it came of love alone.”

## CHAPTER III

### IN MELBOURNE

FOR Kendall life had no period so happy as the two years that followed his marriage, with its cosy cottage in a pretty suburb, with the morning walk across the breezy paddocks that lay behind Pyrmont, and round the head of Darling Harbour, so to his office in Macquarie Street. True it may be, no doubt, that the clerk's slow routine scarcely harmonized with his ideals. He learnt most cordially to loathe that interminable formula, "I have the honour to be." All the mechanical sequence wherein time passes, yet a man's soul is none the richer for the days engulfed, seemed to chafe a little. Nevertheless, his hours of work were short, and the omnibus that carried him out along the Parramatta Road took him back to love, and books, and dreams of fame. In the summer moonlight, a walk across the open Petersham country brought him to the home of his friend Halloran, where, in a wildly fragrant garden, he smoked the pipe of meditative ease, and discoursed of English, French, and German poetry, thought out in pleasant interchange deep problems, the two friends, with Stenhouse or some other

occasional visitor, harmoniously divergent in their views, yet agreeing, as Kendall averred :

“That under every mystery haply flows  
The finest issue of a love divine.”

There was but one jarring note in a life of happy promise. Not long after his marriage he had brought his mother to stay at the Glebe with his young wife. The poor old lady, even then more than half a wreck, had for a while promised a complete amendment, but after a brief hope of reform, gave way again to her ancient malady. She would sometimes meet him at evening on the steps of his office in woeful plight. She forced her way to his very desk, and hoarsely asked him for money, when its purpose was but too darkly written in her trembling hand and tottering gait. It had become a cruel thing to keep his young wife in the same home with the pitiful craving whose presence bred a never-ceasing unhappiness. Concealment of these facts is useless. They are too notorious in Sydney to be hidden. Concealment is worse than useless, for it bids us take a false, perchance an unkindly, view of the tragedy of a human life. The reader of Kendall's works finds in all his later poems an ever-recurrent note of remorse, deep and humiliated. The poet never concealed his failing, never asked the poor hypocrisy of standing well on the outside with the world, while within everything was so far from well. He had that manly heart which disdains an applause not duly earned, and equally disdains to sneak under veils of concealment from the disap-



probation his acts had justly earned. Those who look deeply into the springs of human conduct can see how paramount is the power of heredity, and it is cruel to his memory to suffer him to be judged in ignorance of all the facts of his life. Nor do we harshly judge the mother in merely telling simple facts, as to which there is no possibility of error. Nothing but pity is due to the exquisite sufferings springing from a disease that proved incurable; but either a story is to be truly told or else it is to be left untold, and, out of truth, there are many ways in which the world will be the gainer.

For it is from the tragic griefs of human souls brought home to the public in concrete form that we shall learn our grave responsibilities in devising safeguards for unhappy weakness. A few years later than this Kendall wrote: "You have heard of my poor mother. For the last thirty years she has been a confirmed dipsomaniac. I do not in any way accuse her. She is truly too insane to be responsible, and I can only endeavour to get her into some place where she would be protected from herself. There is no hope for her except in restraint." But society offered him no help in any way in securing the needful coercion. Society foolishly treated, as it still treats, the inebriate as a person of fullest free-will; and though the strong arm of law is invoked for a thousand meaner purposes, it suffers the victim of a relentless grasp to slide inevitably into a degradation beside which mere death is a sweet and lovable thing.

From the scenes that nightly occurred he deter-

mined that his young wife must be withdrawn, and with every purpose of contributing to the support of mother and sisters, he resolved on migrating to Melbourne. Probably, too, he was brought to the choice of that city by the belief that, being twice the size of Sydney, and at that time boasting a greater literary activity, he might earn an income in the congenial pursuit of letters. And, alas that we should have to narrate so early and so black an engulfment of hopes so bright and days so peacefully promising! But by the beginning of 1870 it had become clear, with appalling clearness, that he had a reason much fiercer and more inexorable. His mother's fatal malady was appearing in himself. In general a shy, self-conscious man, with little to say for himself in general company, yet when he was with one or two very intimate friends, and the bottle took its usual place of honour between them, a single glass of wine gave his face a pinker glow, quickened the flow of his thoughts, made his tongue ready, and his spirits gay. But for an evening spent in such cheery fashion the morning had to pay the penalty, in a whiter skin, a duller brain, a deep depression of mind. From that listless misery a glass would lift him, and he had none near by to warn him what that process led to—how the needful glass expands to two, and then to three; how the general drift of life grows wretched save when the magic but treacherous touch of alcohol gives it a transient brightness. It is strange that, with his mother's fate so urgently before him, he should not have been cautious and full of self-distrust. But

the pity of it is that young men in such conditions have small distrust of self. Others may be weak, *they* will be strong. Others are fools enough to let the animating draught become their tyrant, *they* will keep it in its place as a useful servant. Thus did Kendall awake ere the age of thirty to feel himself drifting on the current, and realized how the cataract, known too well, but not sufficiently dreaded, lay right ahead, with its merciless gulf below it.

He had to resign his position, and he started for Melbourne, landing on the Queen's wharf alone, but resolute to make a new and watchfully careful start. His reputation had preceded him. He was well and favourably known in Melbourne. The welcome he received was pleasing to him. He wrote to his wife to join him, and a fortnight later he met her at the steamer, and with her his little daughter, to whom he had given the eccentric name of Araluen, after a stream in the district of his birth. They took a house that faced the Carlton Gardens, and for a few weeks the prospect blossomed. He called on Mr. George Robertson, the publisher, was greeted pleasantly, and soon arranged for an edition of 1500 copies of a new volume of verses, to be called 'Leaves from an Australian Forest,' the publisher to bear the entire cost, he and the author to share the profits, if any.

Kendall, therefore, set cheerily to work. He resolved to include half-a-dozen of the best pieces from his first book, now out of print. But the great bulk of the volume was to consist of poems that had meantime appeared in newspapers and

magazines. The book was sold at five shillings, but only a few hundred copies were taken up by the public, though every effort was made to push the sale in all the Colonies. The net result was a loss to the publisher of £90, and the poet had nothing but the mortification of feeling that the feeble glow of public applause is too easily replaced by a chilling frost.

Yet the volume is one of many charms. In it Kendall makes no appearance as a strong, robust genius, with power and penetration enough to storm the heart of a nation's attention. It is meditatively sweet; it is the work of one essentially a lyric poet, but the dedication and the two opening sonnets strike a note of dainty, half-melancholy beauty such as we expect only from the great masters of song. Very much of the volume is less removed from the commonplace, but 'Araluen,' 'Illa Creek,' 'Moss on a Wall,' 'Bell Birds,' 'September in Australia,' 'The Hut by the Black Swamp,' and 'A Death in the Bush,' through not of that quality which stings the soul of the reader into enthusiasm, sing most soothingly of the beauty of nature as it dwells in Australian hills and streamlets and forests.

Here and there, however, a note of strength appears amid the prevailing weakly sweetness. The description of the hut accursed by murder contains several of these :

"That gracious growth, whose quiet green  
Is as a love in days austere,  
Was never seen,—hath never been  
On slab or roof, deserted here  
For many a year.

Nor comes the bird whose speech is song—  
Whose songs are silvery syllables  
That unto glimmering woods belong,  
And deep meandering mountain dells,  
By yellow wells.

But rather here the wild dog halts,  
And lifts the paw, and looks and howls ;  
And here, in ruined forest vaults,  
Abide dim, dark, death-featured owls,  
Like monks in cowl.

For on this hut hath murder writ  
With bloody finger hellish things ;  
And God will never visit it  
With flower or leaf of sweet-faced springs  
Or gentle wings."

The verses on Charles Harpur, who died the year this volume was published, are probably the sweetest and most graceful lines till then published in Australia, though, in regard to strength and manful vigour, they were far exceeded by the pieces in the little volume which Adam Lindsay Gordon had published in Melbourne just six months previously. The poetic portrait of Harpur is very fine, and stirs emotions in us, as all true poetry should.

"And, far and free, this man of men,  
With wintry hair and wasted feature,  
Had fellowship with gorge and glen,  
And learned the loves and runes of Nature.

Strange words of wind, and rhymes of rain,  
And whispers from the inland fountains  
Are mingled in his various strain  
With leafy breaths of piny mountains.

But as the under-currents sigh  
Beneath the currents of a river,  
The music of Humanity  
Dwells in his forest-psalm for ever."

And yet, of all that this volume contains, those have the most cunning art in touching the hidden springs of emotion, which sadly sing of his own boyhood's communing with forest and hill-enshrouded gully.

"River, myrtle-rimmed, and set  
Deep among unfooted dells—  
Daughter of grey hills of wet  
Born by mossed and yellow wells,  
Cities soil the life with rust,  
Water banks are cool and sweet,  
River, tired of noise and dust  
Here I come to rest my feet."

Meantime, to earn a living, Kendall had been trying to work as a journalist ; but, as he afterwards confessed, his capacity in that way was small. He could write an exquisite lyric, he was a capable reviewer of a book of verse. But of that readiness which will, at an hour's notice, handle in attractive form the topic that happens to be uppermost in public notice he had little trace. He wrote occasionally for the *Argus* and the *Australasian*, but more particularly for *Melbourne Punch*, and a humorous paper then well known by the title of *Humbug*. Any income thus to be made, however, was only fitful, for his style in prose was no way popular. As for poetry, seeing that no set of verses as yet published by any paper in the Colonies was ever

known to cause the sale of a hundred additional copies, or add anything to the commercial value of the paper, it is not wonderful that editors print them chiefly as a compliment to the writers, and very rarely pay for them. Kendall did, in fact, repeatedly receive money for his poems, but no livelihood could possibly be made from their publication.

After a dreary time of hopes and disappointments, of seeming openings to cheerier avenues, and their incontinent closing again, he applied for a position in the Civil Service. A temporary vacancy was given him in the statist's office, from which, as the chance arose, he might have passed into something more lasting. But the first task to which he was set was the addition of a huge table of death returns. He had to add up these formidable columns and carry their sums at foot to the right in a grand total. Then he had to add up each line to the right into a final column, and by the addition of that column reach again a total which would agree with the former. Three days he toiled to secure the due agreement; it was work for which he was utterly unfitted. Brain-fever and madness lay in it, he declared, and he departed from the office, the vertical and horizontal figures still unbalanced.

But the one consolation of these years was a number of literary friendships which sprang up. He was early admitted of the Yorick, then an entirely literary confraternity. He was far from being a typical club man. Dressed in a suit of black, with long loose frock-coat, his black-gloved hands folded over his invariable umbrella (generally laid across his

knees), his tall and narrow-brimmed hat standing on its crown beside his chair—he looked like an undertaker from some melodrama dropped in among a godless set of jovial spirits. He never drank, he never talked; he occasionally, for the form of the thing, drew a furtive puff or two from his pipe. He gathered up his hat and umbrella and departed, to be the subject of droll witticisms among the rest of the light-hearted company.

Like a club, too, was the office of the *Colonial Monthly*, a memorable magazine, edited by Marcus Clarke. It was printed in a bluestone building near the foot of Elizabeth Street, to the right hand of him who faces the railway. There the editor had a room to be his den; and there it was his delight to rally his contributors—Gordon, Kendall, McCrae, Telo, Horne, Shillinglaw, and others. Here would Kendall look in—take, unfortunately, his share in those little cheering wafts of Bacchus, and open his eyes to recognize some caricature of himself among the ludicrous charcoal or ink designs that frescoed the plaster walls as far up as the human arm could reach.

Kendall knew nothing whatsoever of any form of athletic sports, had no pleasure in horses, and loathed what he considered the idiotic frenzy of the race-course. He and Lindsay Gordon could, therefore, never grow intimate by reason of a community of tastes. They certainly never became bosom friends, yet Gordon, with his truly gentlemanly feeling, looked beneath that odd exterior, which more frivolous wits used only as food for fun. He saw an inner core of goodness, and their common poetic enthusiasm made



a partial bond between them. Gordon, as letters before me show, made frequent use of Kendall's opinion in connection with 'Ashtaroth' and his later lyrics. In a letter without date, written to his brother poet, he says:

"Your 'Hut by the Black Swamp' is glorious. I never read it before, but I know it now by heart. The early part is wonderful. I was licking into shape some verses of mine, entitled 'Camped by the Creek,' when I read your verses, and I immediately burnt my poor attempt." What Kendall thought of Gordon's poetry may be seen in the glowing critique he wrote in 1870 for the *Australasian*. But the intimacy of the two never was of that sort which included much visiting of each other's houses. Both were poor, and both were proud.

Kendall had been soon forced to leave the first house he had rented in front of the Carlton Gardens. He had moved, with his wife and the sickly baby Araluen, to a cheaper house in Fitzroy, and then to one still cheaper in Collingwood. Meantime poverty, disappointment, and anxiety wrought an unutterable depression, and slowly the good resolves all melted away. He grew more and more unsteady, became less capable of work, and drifted rapidly into squalor. The wretched family hid their heads in a dingy lane of Richmond, while the poet, whose soul but five years before had been aglow with high ideals, and a love for all that is beautiful and mysterious in nature, spent his evenings in obscure public-houses, and his nights too often seated in some lane or right-of-way.

Eight years later, when the fierce, foul dream of

this time had spent its force, and given place to a long, slow, remorseful time of quietness, he wrote of himself:

“Have I no word at all for him  
Who used down fetid lanes to slink,  
And squat in tap-room corners grim,  
And drown his thoughts in dregs of drink?  
This much I'll say, that when the flame  
Of reason re-assumed its force,  
The hell the Christian fears to name  
Was Heaven to his fierce remorse.”

In the depths of their misery the baby died. She was a bright intelligent little girl, whom Dr. Neild remembers as of striking resemblance to her father. For the sake of literature the genial doctor attended the child, and befriended the unhappy family to the best of his power. In his poverty Kendall was unable to pay for the child's burial, and in his reminiscence he writes:

“I only hear the brutal curse  
Of landlord clamouring for his pay,  
And yonder is the pauper's hearse  
That comes to take a child away.  
Apart, and with the half-grey head  
Of sudden age, again I see  
The father writing by the dead  
To earn the undertaker's fee.”

In later years, Kendall was not solicitous to hide the truth. Nor need we be. He thought that if the lesson of his life were sombre, better it should be sincere, and bear its fruit of warning.

But the one really intimate friend of those days,

the one who brought the cheeriest ray into that dismal home, was Mr. G. Gordon McCrae, whose talents the poet held in deep respect, and for whom he ever after entertained a warm and grateful affection. Mrs. Kendall says of him, "he was at this time a very true friend to us both."

One or two gleams of good fortune burst through the clouds of these dark days. He won a prize offered in Sydney for an Exhibition cantata. Horne, the well-known author of 'Orion,' was the judge, and communicated with Kendall in a letter, warmly commending the promise seen in the poet's work.

He said: "It gave me great and unmixed pleasure to learn that you are 'Arakoon,' whose poem I would have selected as worthy of three prizes had three been on the cards. I think that such a poem could not have been predicted of the author of your juvenile poems. But some of your more recent compositions which I have accidentally seen showed me what great advances you had made." A prize was offered for a cantata to be performed at the opening of the Melbourne Town-hall. This also he won, with his poem entitled 'Euterpe,' set to music by Charles Horsley—another son of genius, who, at this time, marred his health by festive times in Melbourne.

The cantata, however, was not performed till after the poet had left the city. At the death of her little daughter, Mrs. Kendall longed exceedingly to be back among her friends in Sydney. In the early part of 1871 they mournfully retraced their steps,

paying their heart-broken farewells to a little grave.

“Take this rose and very gently place it on the tender deep Mosses, where our little darling, Araluen, lies asleep.  
Put the blossom close to baby. Kneel with me, my love, and pray ;  
We must leave the bird we’ve buried, say good-bye to her to-day.  
In the shadow of our trouble we must go to other lands,  
And the flowers we have fostered will be left to other hands.”

He had but the one great comfort, a wife who would care for him tenderly in the deepest of his sorrows.

“Who, because your love was noble, faced with me the lot austere,  
Ever pressing with its hardship on the man of letters here.  
Let me feel that you are near me ; lay your hand within my own.  
You are all I have to live for now that we are left alone.”

## CHAPTER IV

### HIS FINAL YEARS

HALF hopeful, half despairing, husband and wife turned their backs on Melbourne and the sordid memories it enfolded. Would the new resolves hold out? Would the nearness of early-life friendships, and the chance of renewed permanence of employment, serve to exorcise the demon so loathed yet so imperious? If these were the hopes, they had within them the ferments of their own decay. Let us make no pretence of a sickly sentimental glozing of the truth; no refined and patronizing allusions to depths which we might reveal, but which, in pity for a brother man, much feebler and more foolish than ourselves, we magnanimously suppress. What happened to Kendall might have happened, must have happened, to any one with the same inherited brain and the same surroundings. The poet is the man who, of all others, most clearly lays bare his soul and its workings to our view. And Kendall's own verses through all his later years have a deep dark under-current of remorse, and unavailing regret for the noble career that might have been. Shall the life of such a man be complete in the dates of his outward

doings, where he lived, what prizes he won, what people he knew? Must it not rather be the record of his truer self, of the struggles, the failures, the victories of the inward life? The life of no man is worth the writing unless it reveal the actual human spirit that dwelt within him, and far before all other men, the life of the poet must be transparently honest if we are to do anything whatsoever to render clear the meaning of his verses, which almost always need to be set in juxtaposition with the circumstances of his experience if they are to be completely understood. What the tragedy was of Kendall's existence, and what the triumph he eventually won, can be known only by realizing the temptations, the struggle, the depth of the fall, the nature of the victory.

And it was a fall of woeful depth. If the reader may but realize the depth of it I shall spare him the pain of cumulative details. It is sufficient to know that he became a wanderer and an outcast on the streets of Sydney; that his wife had, perforce, to make shift for herself. No longer might he suffer the least restraint. He slept in lane or park, or out in the fields, as the fiend he served so unwillingly might determine. Let one picture do duty for all. On a Sunday afternoon this scholarly man, this poet, still girt in despairing intervals with the light that glowed from young ideals, steals, weak and tottering, into the kitchen of a house upon the Liverpool Road, near the Lansdowne Bridge. He asks for Henry Parkes, the occupant of it, who, emerging, fails for a time to recognize his once well-known contributor, so

sadly had all circumstances served to alter him. The poor prodigal is refreshed, stripped of the tattered blacks, reclothed, welcomed in kindly fashion. Next day driven over to Liverpool, set to board with decent people who might nurse him into health, taken to Sydney, kept there for a time, and placed upon his feet with a little private subscription list. A hundred sincere and yet mournful promises usher the nerve-shattered son of genius out again to face the world's temptations. There is a time of mad and persistent struggle, and again the poor climber falls back from his perilous slippery cliffs to plunge once more into the yeasty gulf. Sir Henry Parkes was not one who, from the heights of an immaculate disdain, could have loaded with reproach the weak head of the poor poet. But again and again did he and others gather him in from eating with the swine, and set him at the board among men more valued and more prosperous than himself, though mostly his inferiors in all but the one fatal respect.

In 1872 the malady reached its climax. The suffering victim of hereditary neurosis had for a time to be secluded in an asylum. Not that his intellect had given way; but only that an intense emotional weakness had overtaken him and passed into recurrent fits of melancholia. That his old powers were still his own, was shown by the poems which he heads with the sad superscription, "Written in the Shadow of 1872." They include his 'Mooni,' wherein he yearns for his first innocent love of the laughing streams :

"Head whereon the white is stealing,  
Heart whose hurts are past all healing,  
Where is now the first pure feeling?  
Sin and shame have left their trace."

They include his 'Voice in the Wild Oak.'

"Nor had I sinned and suffered then  
To that superlative degree  
That I would rather seek, than men,  
Wild fellowship with thee.

But he, who hears this autumn day  
Thy more than deep autumnal rhyme,  
Is one whose hair was shot with grey  
By Grief instead of Time.

No more he sees the affluence  
Which makes the heart of Nature glad:  
For he has lost the fine first sense  
Of beauty that he had.

And I, who am that perished soul,  
Have wasted so these powers of mine,  
That I can never write that whole  
Pure perfect speech of thine."

They include his 'Narrara Creek,' wherein occur also those remorseful allusions that lacerate the heart of one who has read the lofty aspirations of his earlier days, and realizes how a drug can lay so low a soul of noble ideals.

When recovered beyond the need of confinement, he faced the world once more with manful hopes and resolutions; but yet with mournful repetition of the same most lamentable vanquishment. In 1873 he received the appointment of editor of a newspaper at Grafton, a town where he was well



known and valued. The steamer he sailed in called for a few hours at Newcastle by the way. Kendall was one of the passengers who went ashore, but not one of those who returned on board. His position was soon forfeited; he earned a few shillings from time to time writing poetry for the local papers; walking long distances and hiding from the face of man, living, as he himself expressed it,

“In the folds of a shame without end.”

But when the case seemed hopeless to the most sanguine eye, deliverance was approaching. A last and powerful effort of his own to throw off his oppressor coincided with a favourable conjuncture of circumstances. Until now he had never lost the craving for a literary life; but a literary life at which a livelihood may be made is necessarily a city life, and a city life offers daily and hourly those temptations which he could resist ninety-nine times out of the hundred; but, failing the hundredth, he was hurled back to renew once more his struggle. He resolved henceforth to shun the city; flee the tempter and bury himself far in the friendly shade of some sylvan retirement. Now it so chanced that circumstances favoured his plan. He numbered among his sincerest friends two worthy brothers of the name of Fagan. With them he had already spent many months of the years 1871 and 1872, living as their guest at Brisbane Water, not far from Sydney; a time of happy but unfulfilled promise, wherein the father of his two hosts took a friendly care of him and tried to guard him from temptation.

One of the brothers was at this time starting a new business at the head of a lonely little inlet named Camden Haven, on the coast two hundred miles north of Sydney. He offered to Kendall the position of accountant and paymaster of it. The unhappy poet gladly accepted, and transferred himself to the pretty spot, where, upon a lovely bend in a quiet little river, a house was built for him in which his wife soon joined him. Behind the Haven rise the wooded slopes of the fine coast ranges that lie between the Manning river and the Macleay. Deep in the tangled forest there grew abundance of cedar trees, and the new business was concerned in employing some sixty or seventy men on contract to cut these trees and deliver the great red logs by the shores of the Haven, whence a few sailing craft belonging to the firm carried them to the timber-yards of the brothers Fagan in Sydney.

Kendall's duty was to receive the timber, pay for it, supervise the execution of all contracts for cutting, and keep all the necessary books. As the system was largely one of barter, Kendall had much to keep him busy, for all the provisions which the cutting parties needed had to be issued in part payment for their cedar.

His hours therefore were long, as parties of men continued to arrive at all times of the day and far on in the night. Yet activity was good for him. Of all medicines it was that most suited to his malady. In the summer weather he was up and about in the cool sunrise, enjoying a walk in the woods before an early breakfast; for his work began at six. In these

hours of dewy morning he had his ramble, listening to the cat-bird, the bell-bird, or the whip-bird, exploring some mossy covert, or down the stream to the beach, where he could gaze out upon sea and wind-swept sky.

As a sedative to his nerves, he smoked a great deal, his snatches of leisure during the day being mostly spent standing outside of the buildings, full in the sunshine, while he quietly puffed and thought. His appearance was wholly different now. The face was thin and pale, as it long had been, but it was seared with deep lines. The upper lip carried a heavy moustache, the chin a small and rather scraggy beard. His hair fell in iron-grey curls over his collar. His health was feeble, and his once buoyant hopes of ambition all but dead.

And yet, after a time, his life became one of a tranquil, though half melancholy autumn. His wife was with him again, and his two little boys. Another boy was added ere long, and then, joy to the poet's heart, a little girl came in 1878, and he called her by the unusual name of Persia.

"I have given my darling the name  
Of a land at the gates of the day,  
Where morning is always the same,  
And the spring passes never away."

In a couple of years the old failing was practically mastered. He was victorious, but at what a cost of health and unavailing regret! For seven years he never saw city, town, or village, but a renewed peace was falling on his slowly recovering nerves.

"I suffered so much," he writes, "in that awful past. My Gethsemane was one of fire and blood. It is impossible I should ever be a happy man; the past is too heavy upon me. But so long as I have any health whatever, my wife shall never suffer again." And there is every probability that love for his wife assisted him much in his victory over weakness. Mrs. Kendall says: "Few women were ever loved as I was by him. To me he was the essence of kindness, and his gentleness increased as our attachment, in spite of trials, became warmer whilst the years rolled on."

A little domestic poem of that period, not meant for the public eye, and now for the first time printed, gives a pleasing impression of the simplicity and devotion of the feeling he entertained towards one who had braved much for his sake, and had been very patient with him under circumstances which had demanded all the consideration of a generous nature.

#### TO MY DARLING LOTTIE.

"I that have loved you so much,  
Loved you asleep and awake,  
Trembled because of your touch,  
What shall I say for your sake?  
Far in the falls of the day,  
Down in the meadows of dew,  
What have you left me to say,  
Filled with the beauty of you?"

Here are the best of my thoughts,  
See, they are gentle and grave.  
Lottie, I come to thy courts,  
Darling, with all that I have.

When will you turn with your sweet  
Face to my love and to me,  
Learning the way to repeat  
Words that are brightened by thee?"

At this time it is clear that he must have had small leisure for writing, but by degrees the old instinct awoke, and he began to contribute to *Freeman's Journal*, *Sydney Punch*, the *Sydney Mail*, and the *Queenslander*. Unluckily, the work he then accomplished showed at times an altered temper of mind. Violent satires like 'Gehazi,' and other poetical lampoons of the time, were utterly uncongenial to his talents, and were the outcome of a mind more or less embittered, and of an ambition that had lost its old healthy tone, and had become sour and morbid.

Moreover, the humorous pieces, to which he now somewhat wilfully devoted himself, had no spontaneous ring about them. His was no humorist's mind. His Muse, if not gloomy, was at least always serious, and his truest note of all was more or less pathetic. Whether it was the pathos of simple domestic life, or the weirder and grander pathos of death in the wilderness, or of the ghost-haunted glen, it is pathos and pathos alone that forms the emotional influence in all his felicity of description, his tunefulness of phrase.

He made small impression, therefore, with his comic verses, 'Jim the Splitter,' 'Billy Vickers,' and a multitude of others written at this time. But occasionally there were lyrics of the old quality, especially those that carried in their lines a sweet,

vague mysticism. Among these finer verses of this period there are many of his very best, such as his 'Hy-Brasil,' his 'Pytheas,' his 'Beyond Kerguelen,' and a few others.

He had many correspondents, and among them Mr. Dalley, who, in 1880, urged him to collect the best of these scattered pieces into a volume. Hence appeared at the end of that year his last book, which he entitled 'Songs from the Mountain.' Five hundred subscribers' names were received before publication, and the poet was thus assured of recovering at least his outlay of £100; which would be a very favourable outlook for a poet anywhere, and one of the most signal good fortune for a colonial poet.

The book was printed and some copies delivered when the publisher, Mr. William Maddock, grew alarmed about the fierceness of a satire which had slipped in without his notice. The piece was certainly in bad taste, but Kendall accused the publisher of being "chicken-hearted." The affair got into the newspapers, which in the main took the poet's part. He had, however, to pay for the reprinting of the book, yet, as is always the way with the public, this little breeze, this small commotion, had more effect in causing the book to be known and sold than all the poetry it contained. A thousand copies were taken up, and, after all, the poet netted about £80.

And so, though not to be ranked among the great financial successes of the period, it was, after the manner of poets' expectations, a perfect triumph.

No poet, up to that date, had ever made a halfpenny out of a volume. In general the cry of the fraternity, when satisfied, had been, "Great success, lost only fifty pounds this time."

And indeed only accidental and adventitious circumstances led to even Kendall's mild pecuniary good fortune. Yet the book contains beyond a doubt the best of his work,—some little of it being work as good in its way as any that has enriched the English language from that time to this. It is true that out of the thirty-five pieces there are at least a dozen too poor to be worth the room they occupy; and nearly as many more that would neither make nor mar a reputation; they are such perhaps as only a few people could have written; but they have no signal excellence that can make them live in the heart of the reader among his poetic treasures.

But what of that, when there are more than another dozen that grow dearer the longer one knows them, and add so substantially to our resources of beauty and of music?

These may be divided into two classes, the sweetly pathetic, and those of moving dignity; the one set melting the heart with sad yearnings, the other firing it with great emotions set in stately words.

Of the first class the most notable are a despairing love-poem entitled 'Mary Rivers'; the tender lament over his dead baby 'Araluen,' marred by some touches of a commonplace taste, but, apart from these blemishes, a charming outpouring of paternal affection. So also there is a sweet lyric addressed to his only living daughter Persia; also marred by

intrusions of somewhat tawdry expressions, no way robust in any part, but everywhere sincere and touching.

“A life that is turning to grey,  
Has hardly been happy, you see ;  
But the rose that has dropped on my way  
Is morning and music to me.”

So also pity and tender regret, with frequent irritations, it is true, at inadequacy of expression, are the emotions experienced by him who reads ‘Mooni,’ ‘The Voice in the Wild Oak,’ ‘Narrara Creek,’ and ‘Orara,’ the poems which are chiefly occupied by remorse and confessions of humiliated hopes.

The same description applies in lessened degree to his poem on Leichardt, which also is musical and tender, but marred by too apparent an effort. It wants a certain manfulness of spirit, the largeness and boldness of grasp needed to do justice to the theme. But that tone of mournful wail is better suited to two pieces which express the poet’s sorrow for departed friends. In the verses entitled ‘By the Cliffs of the Sea,’ Kendall laments the death of Samuel Bennett, the well-known journalist of Sydney, founder of newspapers, and recorder of the adventures of Australian discovery. He had been uniformly kind to Kendall, who now wrote of him :

“In the folds of a shame without end,  
When the lips of the scorner were curled,  
I found in this brother a friend,  
The last that was left in the world.



Ah, under the surface austere,  
Compassion was native to thee.  
I send, from my solitude here,  
This rose for the grave by the sea."

The second dirge is entitled 'Names upon a Stone,' and bewails the death of the father of the brothers Fagan.

"A beauty like the light of song  
Is in my dreams that show  
The grand old man who lived so long  
As spotless as the snow.  
In dells where once we used to rove,  
The slow sad water grieves ;  
And ever comes from glimmering grove  
The liturgy of leaves."

But by far the finest pieces in this volume are those five that rise into the stately mood. In them are none of those faults of weakness or sins of bad taste. They move on with equable, unbroken flow to the end, and stand the high-water mark in Australia for poetry of the dignified type.

The first of these is the dedication of the volume, 'To a Mountain.'

"To thee, oh Father of the stately peaks,  
Above me in the loftier light, to thee,  
Imperial brother of those awful hills,  
Whose heads are where the gods are, and whose sides  
Of strength are belted round with all the zones  
Of all the world, I dedicate these songs.  
I take thee for my teacher. In the psalm  
Of thy grave winds, and in the liturgy  
Of singing waters, lo, my soul has heard  
The higher worship ; and from thee indeed  
The broad foundations of a finer hope

Were gathered in. Thou hast the perfect rest  
 Which makes the heaven of the highest gods.  
 To thee the noises of this violent time  
 Are far faint whispers ; and, from age to age,  
 Within this world, and yet apart from it,  
 Thou standest. Round thy lordly capes, the sea  
 Rolls on with a superb indifference  
 For ever. In thy deep green spacious glens  
 The silver fountains sing for ever. Far  
 Above dim ghosts of waters in the caves,  
 The royal robe of morning on thy head  
 Abides for ever ! Evermore the wind  
 Is thy august companion, and thy peers  
 Are cloud, and thunder, and the face sublime  
 Of blue mid-heaven."

The whole poem has that magnificent blending of intensity with dignity which recalls Bryant's masterpiece, 'Thanatopsis,' and the march of the blank verse is closely analogous.

A very fine effect is produced in 'Pytheas,' the monody on the adventurous spirit of the first of men, that Athenian of the far-off dim days, who sailed round Great Britain. It is graceful, and it is sweet, a little too sweet perhaps for many tastes, and in its trochaic metre it is sometimes ineptly handled, the reader has to suppress many accents where the ear just a little resents their suppression.

"Who among the world's high singers, ever breathed the tale  
 sublime,  
*Of the man who coasted England, in the misty dawn of time ?*"

The words in italics ought, by the scheme of the metre, to be accented. The ear makes no great objection to an occasional suppression of accents in

this way. Sometimes it lends an added grace. But when line after line demands the same concession, the effect grows monotonous. On the other hand, the reading of the lines with unnatural accents upon such syllables produces a sing-song effect which soon irritates. Yet apart from this technical defect, there is fine feeling in the poem, and it bears a very long and familiar acquaintance. Of the same class, but in every way nobler and more perfectly handled, is the fine legend named 'Hy-Brasil.' But of all pieces in the book, that which in general makes most impression on the lover of poetry is the fine rhapsody called 'Beyond Kerguelen,' a weird and gloomy picture of the frozen regions in the wild Antarctic that lie beyond Kerguelen's Island.

"Down in the south, by the waste without sail on it,  
Far from the zone of the blossom and tree,  
Lieth, with winter and whirlwind and wail on it,  
Ghost of a land by the ghost of a sea."

As the lines proceed, they wake in the mind of the reader vague emotions of the loneliness, the joylessness, the abhorrence in these the dreariest of earth's most desolate wastes. The poem must rank among the best that Australia has produced. Not that it is to receive an absolutely clean bill of criticism. It has manifest weaknesses. Its dactylic metre is one that soon grows monotonous to English ears, giving a strong effect for thirty or forty lines, then beginning to pall. Moreover, the poet has not altogether known when to leave off, for in the first four or five stanzas he has completed his description, and those which follow weaken the general effect by

mere reiteration. However, with all its very evident failings, it is a poem such as few men who have ever lived could have written.

This volume of 230 pages, printed in good style, and judiciously placed on the market, was Henry Kendall's only success in the way of publication. Otherwise the work of his pen was little remunerative; but the close of 1880 found him very sanguine, and with £80, for the first time in his life, in his possession.

It was scarcely what one would call a gigantic pecuniary success, but it helped, along with the praise it everywhere obtained as manifestly his finest work, to make the life he led seem dull and without future issue for himself, or promise of adequate education for his boys. After seven years' seclusion he thought he could trust himself in the city, and he therefore abandoned his engagement with the Fagans. In 1881 he removed his family to Cundletown, a township about thirty miles distant, on the Manning river, where, for three months, they all lived very happily in a pretty home, and with prospects in many ways reassuring. For Sir Henry Parkes, forgiving and forgetting some sharp political lampoons, keen if not clever, had promised to secure for him some suitable appointment under the State. Kendall, in spite of these attacks, had always admired Sir Henry. "He has done," he wrote in 1879, "many noble and beautiful things, and he is a man of immense capacity," but then the poet goes on to describe his antipathy to some parts of the statesman's policy.

Now that the veteran has passed way, amid a somewhat overclouded popularity, it is right to recall the generous and kindly actions of which his life holds much record. Nor is this the least, that at the risk of personal challenge in Parliament, he befriended a luckless man of letters by creating for him a position. It was certainly understood that a "Superintendent of State Forests" was needed in New South Wales; and it is true that Kendall had now had seven years of experience in superintending the cutting of timber. None the less, this office, with £500 a year attached to it, was, at the risk of political enmity and opposition, practically made by the statesman for a poet who had mercilessly lampooned him. It is of course a wrong system, and an illogical one, that of rewarding a literary man by creating for him, at the public expense, an office in which he is certain to find no opening for the exercise of his own special gifts, and is moreover fairly certain to block the way of the man who has especial talents and experience for the place. But what under present conditions is to be done? The poet had deserved well: Sir Henry wished to express the national appreciation of a national benefit, and practically he had no other course open to him.

The family seemed to like Cundletown, and Kendall resolved to make it the centre of his tours of inspection. He bought himself a horse, and entered on his new duties. His first two or three trips proved to him that he had miscalculated his strength. Though only forty, he was an old man with feeble frame, utterly incapable of rough rides

and frequent wettings, of camping-out and other incidentals of the position. "My health" he writes, "is not what it used to be. The effects of sorrow and excess have written characters of strange emphasis on me."

Towards the middle of 1882 he and his friend George Fagan went off together on a tour of inspection to the north-west. Kendall was taken ill, and they fell back on Sydney, where he rested till partly recovered. Then they set out again for the Lachlan. A journey had to be performed that lasted on into a bleak and rainy midnight. Kendall took a chill in the lungs, and, fever supervening, his friend once more carried him back to Sydney. His home being still at Cundletown, two hundred miles away, Kendall, at his own request, was placed as a paying patient in St. Vincent's Hospital, where his wife in a day or two joined him. But by that time his chance of recovery was growing very slight; yet he lingered on for a while, and was removed to Mr. Fagan's house at Redfern. Here he spent a few feeble days, aware that the end was coming, speaking regretfully of the past and of ideals never to be realized. He was anxious to live to the end of July, so that his wife might have the month's salary in full, a small care for a dying man, yet speaking much of a general habit of solicitude. On August 1, with his arm round his wife's neck, he slipped most gently away from this little sphere of the known out into the vastness of the unknown.

He had begged to be buried within sound and sight of the sea. Accordingly it was to the Waverley

cemetery that the little procession of twenty mourners moved on that afternoon of early spring. His grave stands high, and the monument, thereon erected four years later, overlooks a sunny expanse of slope, terminating in the dreamy blue of the wide Pacific. A public subscription for the family, whereby a sum of £1200 was raised, indicated that the nation was not unmindful of his claims, though half the money a year earlier would have been more to the purpose. For the sympathy of the public is fitful, and depends very much on the way that the chance of circumstances catches its fancy. A poet dead, a family left in penniless anxiety, then kindly thousands will subscribe who never bought the poet's books, much less read them.

Yet Kendall's verse has influences that will do good to the heart and the head of the reader. It is true he has made no great delineation of human character; he has no heights of passion to utter; he has but the one true note, and he is faithful to it. He paints with exquisite beauty the charms of nature as they are seen in Australia. That is the one thing he could do, and he has done it well. If another note may be added, also fairly true perhaps but secondary, it would be a certain sweet pathetic manner of dealing with simple domestic affections. He had dreamt of greater things, but after the age of eight-and-twenty the dream had steadily died away into a wistful might-have-been:

"It is too late to write them now,  
The ancient fire is cold ;

No ardent lights illumine the brow,  
As in the days of old.

I cannot dream the dream again,  
But when the happy birds  
Are singing in the sunny rain  
I think I hear its words."

In the last few months of his life another dream had come to take its place. He left behind an unfinished and fragmentary poem under the title of 'Outre Mer,' from which, for the concluding piece in the collected edition of his works, I picked three stanzas that were most complete. They represent his last poetic musings, and though sad they have a hopeful beauty of their own :

"I see, as one in dreaming,  
A broad, bright, quiet sea ;  
Beyond it lies a haven,  
The only home for me.  
Some men grow strong with trouble,  
But all my strength is passed ;  
And tired and full of sorrow  
I long to sleep at last."



## MARCUS CLARKE

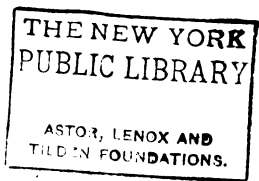
ON August 2, 1881, there passed away, in the prime of early manhood, a notable pioneer in the fiction fields of Australia, and one of the most promising *littérateurs* ever developed under exclusively Australian surroundings. Born in the richly-historical old court suburb of Kensington in 1846, he came to Melbourne a lad of about eighteen, and at thirty-four his requiem has been sung in prose and verse ; a whole community was stirred at his sad and untimely " taking off " ; while public and private sympathy with his bereaved widow and orphans was generously and effectively expressed throughout Victoria and the adjoining Colonies.

In the days when the original " Wizard of the North " held sway over the imagination of British readers of fiction, when mailed knights did prodigies of valour on scowling infidels ; when generous Robin Hoods and profligate but stalwart cattle-lifters bore swooning maidens into mountain fastnesses, and while cowed monks and baffled conspirators glided in mysterious glamour across the humdrum of daily life, the chances that Australia would ever take a place in



*[To face page 300]*

MARCUS CLARKE.



the fields of fiction were remote indeed. Romance cannot consort with newness. A country without an ivy-clad ruin cannot rear a people who may be expected to believe in ghosts; and the lone watcher in the moated grange, with its moss-coated flower-pots, would be terribly *de trop* in a weather-board hut with a paling fence.

But the tide turned when the genial author of 'Pickwick' brought us face to face with our natural surroundings, and gave us for personal friends distinct types of people that we all knew familiarly. With Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, and the later novels of Bulwer, fiction took a new departure. The romance that must ever cling about the "old, old story" remained, but the romance that makes some chapters of 'Ivanhoe' or 'Kenilworth' read like a dream of a wax-works out for a holiday—a phantasmagoria of gorgeous inconsistency—died under the humour and satire of the modern masters. And with the change the fiction fields of Australia were thrown open for cultivation.

In our somewhat complacent prosperity we are apt to think that the 'Song of the Shirt' could hardly find truthful voice amongst us; but, Heaven knows! the 'Bridge of Sighs' has been found to span the Yarra as well as the Thames. There is even now a condition of "society" growing up that makes an Australian Becky Sharp a possibility; and, to come to more cosmopolitan characters, surely the very counterparts of the projectors of Martin Chuzzlewit's "Eden" may be found between the lines in the advertisements of some of our land agents, while the

happy complacency of Mark Tapley is not altogether unknown amidst the hardships and discomforts of our struggling selectors' homes. We have not yet acclimatized the Peggottys, and have no desire to develop Mr. Bumble, Tom All-Alone, or Poor Joe; but who shall say that our mercantile community would not furnish excellent copies alike of Mr. Dombey and of the Cheeryble Brothers? There is many a sad Tom Pinch in lonely Collingwood lodgings, and scores of poor Smikes struggling with a hard fate in Melbourne; while the handsome Steerforth and the complacent Carker may be seen on the block any day.

This being so, it is evident we have in our remote corner of the world all the materials out of which the modern masters have woven their plots and enchanted their readers; with the addition of certain dramatic surroundings, inseparable from the spirit of adventure which inspired our pioneer colonists, and the atmosphere of crime and violence which threw a lurid glare over their involuntary predecessors. In the 'Old Tales of a Young Country' Marcus Clarke tells in terse language, but picturesque style, the story of some dozen episodes in old colonial life that are far stranger than fiction, and but that they are disfigured by the too prevalent brutality of fifty years ago, every one of them might be worked up into a far more attractive novel than the average of the circulating libraries of to-day affords.

Few Australians are aware of the large amount of serial fiction that has been published in the pages of the numerous magazines which have struggled through a chequered and generally brief existence,

during the last quarter of a century; in the weekly journals of the chief cities and in the supplements to the country papers. Amongst the hundreds of stories so published, it is no exaggeration to say that a dozen, or perhaps twenty, would, at an earlier period in the history of fiction and under more favourable circumstances of circulation, have made a permanent reputation for their authors. But, in the crowded market, and with the competition of the teeming English press, not one in a hundred has found its way into permanent book form. The bulk of this kind of work has been done by amateurs, or by pressmen whose duties of a totally different character allowed them only very spare intervals of leisure to essay imaginative flights. To ensure financial success from such work, even genius must have a much wider field of readers than our busy community has yet been able to furnish; while we have hitherto been too intent on more material interests to produce a class of men like the poet Rogers, who, combining affluence with cultivation, was willing to spend a small fortune on the elegant productions of his Muse, careless who bought them.

The gifted young author, whose brilliant efforts in the direction of a national Australian literature have been so generally recognized and appreciated, had no such golden vantage ground. Beyond the fact that he received a sound English and classical education at a high-class private school, he was very poorly equipped for the battle of life. He never knew the priceless blessing of a mother's tender care and training, for she died a few months after his

birth. His father was a barrister of limited practice, but well known in literary circles as a clever though caustic critic, much given to social eccentricities. He felt the loss of his wife very keenly, and for a while secluded himself from society; but time dulled the edge of his grief, and as he never remarried, his house gradually became a gathering place for the literary Bohemians of the male sex.

During his earliest years, Marcus Clarke was doubtless left very much to the care of the dependents of his father's household. His health was weak, and his physical frame feeble, and when the time came for him to go to school at the establishment of Dr. Dyne of Highgate, he found himself quite unequal to the rough sports and roystering play of the average English school-boy. He took kindly to learning, and early acquired an insatiable love of reading, which in some measure consoled him for his inability to share the out-door sports of his comrades. For boys of fair character and capacity there is nothing like the life in a well-managed school to bring out their best, and though there is often friction and sometimes a little tyranny, there is no brutality at core. Hence, though he had to suffer some quizzing and badinage about his eccentric ways, he soon found himself at home, and the centre of many friendships. Even in those early days he began to use his pen, and to little sketches which he wrote appended the name of 'Mark Scrivener,' the *nom de plume* under which he afterwards contributed to several Australian magazines the weird fancies of his boyhood.

But, whatever restraining influences might have been exercised over him by Dr. Dyne, to whom he often referred in terms of esteem and admiration, they were rendered nugatory by the home life to which he returned in the frequent vacations. An indulgent and careless father allowed him a latitude in society and amusements that could only be demoralizing to a boy just in his teens. His precocious smartness, his ready wit, and his talent for mimicry made him a prime favourite with the hilarious associates who frequented his father's house, and kept him at late dinner-tables when he would have been physically and mentally better for being sent to bed. In the absence of all imposed discipline, the seeds were sown of that thoughtless prodigality of time and talent, that craving after social excitement and effervescing Bohemianism, which made his manhood a wearing alternation between the wildest exuberance of spirits, and the gloom of the chilliest depression.

Although not much given to talking of his youth, he could not fail to recognize how his always feeble self-control had been handicapped by such experiences, and in one of his introspective moods he sketched with some bitterness, and probably with some exaggeration, the rueful ordeal he had gone through. It will be found in a curious little psychological story of a ghostly order, called 'Human Repetends,' originally published in the *Australasian*. Yet again in 'La Béguine,' one of the tales in 'Four Stories High,' he is sketching himself when he makes his hero say, "So, a wild-eyed and eager



school-boy, I strayed into Bohemia, and acquired in that strange land an assurance and experience ill suited to my age and temperament."

This unwholesome condition of boy life was brought to an end by the death of his father, and the sudden cessation of income. He was then but seventeen years of age, and as, when his father's affairs were wound up, only a few hundred pounds were left, his friends deported him to the care of his uncle in Australia, John Langton Clarke, at that time one of the County Court Judges in Victoria.

The voyage to the Antipodes was made in 1864, in one of those comfortable old liners with which the name of Messrs. Green was so long associated. The *Wellesley* took the usual four months, and in view of the fact that it was Clarke's first experience of the ocean, it is somewhat surprising that in none of his numerous sketches has he referred to it. Many prosperous old colonists, who are prosy enough now, will call to mind with a smile the gushing accounts they wrote to home friends of their first voyage, and how its novelty and charm stirred what little sentiment they had into happiest expression. Perhaps in Clarke's case the surroundings were not to his taste. When he fell amongst uncongenial company he was as mute as an oyster, and if he thought the occasion demanded it, he could wrap himself up in a reserve that defied all social advances.

On his arrival in Melbourne he was kindly received by Judge Clarke, and for a time allowed to explore the heights and depths of colonial life in all the

novel aspects which they would present to the young Londoner. When his limited cash resources were at an end, his uncle sought to start him on the road to earn his own living, and through the good offices of his friend, David Macarthur, then superintendent of the Bank of Australasia, he procured him a probationary appointment, and Marcus Clarke commenced his Australian career in the unimaginative atmosphere of a banking office in Melbourne. It may encourage some bank clerks, who have mastered the dreary routine of that kind of business, to think much of themselves when they learn that an admitted genius like Marcus Clarke failed utterly to acclimatize himself to office life. He hated methodical book-keeping, and a column of figures was a weariness of the flesh that would depress him for a whole day; he made the most ludicrous mistakes, and could never be got to realize the paramount importance of exact accuracy in pass-books or official returns. But, if he failed to satisfy the authorities, he was the life and soul of the office during his brief novitiate. With a ready faculty of easy versification, he was continually delighting his brother clerks with burlesque ballads and heroic verse upon the topics of the hour, in which he satirized his companions or lampooned the ruling officials with equal indifference and daring. It came to be recognized in the office that a man who could write off tragic passages from *Æschylus* in the original, or turn some commonplace joke of the moment into excellent Horatian verse, ought not to be expected to write up pass-books; and so, rather

than see Pegasus in harness, every clerk's hand was ready to help him at his work.

Eliza Cook defined common-sense as "genius in its working dress"; but, judged by the converse, the definition, though sounding well epigrammatically, would not appear to be correct, for the eccentricities of genius are proverbial, and it is always doing something utterly at variance with common-sense. Marcus Clarke undoubtedly possessed genius of a high order; and, in connection with literary work, he rarely touched anything that he did not adorn by the epigrammatic brightness of his style and the naturalness of his diction. He was a keen observer, with a quick sense of the ludicrous, rapid in his generalizations, subtle in his humour, invariably cynical in his estimate of motives, and, while a master of restrained satire, could at times be bitterly caustic or violently denunciatory. But take the pen out of his hand, and he at once became conspicuous from his utter inability to adapt himself to the practical affairs of daily life; as is common with the possessors of a brilliant imagination, he was essentially a creature of impulse, and did whatever seemed the pleasantest and most desirable thing at the moment. This incapacity to give any weight to prudential considerations surrounded him with perpetual difficulties and carping cares, from which he lacked the energy, though he often expressed the earnest wish, to free himself. He might have formed the subject of an additional chapter for the elder D'Israeli's 'Calamities and Quarrels of Authors'; for, while he possessed much of the kindly generosity

of Oliver Goldsmith, it was of the same irresponsible kind, and he was generally involved in as many bitter feuds as that inveterate quarreller, Walter Savage Landor. He had an unhappy talent for alienating friends, and generally rendered the first breach irreparable by the caustic cynicism of his pen. Nevertheless, he retained some strong friendships to the day of his death, and in his impulsive way he gave his whole heart where it evoked a responsive feeling of regard.

When he realized his unfitness for office life, he spent a year or so on the station of the late Mr. John Holt, at Ledcourt, in the Wimmera district, where, while attempting to acquire "colonial experience," he had opportunities for silent communing with nature, that impressed the seal of truthfulness on his descriptions of the Australian bush to an extent unequalled by any other writer who has essayed the theme. In proof of this it is only necessary to point to probably the most perfect of his minor stories, 'Pretty Dick,' the scene of which is laid on this station. Apart from the charming grace and touching pathos of the narrative, the artistically graphic finish of his picture of a hot day on the plains and in the ranges is a model of lucid word-painting.

Here, in the uninterrupted loneliness of bush life,—for the selectors' farms, which now cover the whole district, had not then been called into existence,—he was thrown back on his own resources, and passed much of his time in writing those quaint sketches of the hangers-on of pastoral life, the photographic

accuracy of which is unsurpassed in Australian literature. His keen perception took in alike all the quiet beauties of the sombre forest primeval, with its ghostly suggestions; the dappled shade of the ferny gullies; the glaring stretch of hot dusty plains; the wealth of colour with which the rising and setting sun painted the rocky face of the rugged Grampians; the eccentric blasphemy of the half-drunken bullock-driver; the authoritative swagger of the representative of King Cobb; the pretentious gentility of the bar-loafer, who "had known better days"; and the score of half-developed fragments of humanity that made up the life of such a centre as "Bullock Town," by which name he has immortalized the post town of his district, known to the official mind as Glenorchy.

In the exquisite idyll of 'Pretty Dick,' and in the admirable introduction which he wrote for a volume of Gordon's poems, he has described the prevailing characteristics of the Australian bush, and its effect upon the imagination, in a manner that leaves nothing for his successors. In the more humorous sketches, where he deals so realistically with the eccentric humankind that animated the deadly dulness of "Bullock Town," his style bears a strong resemblance to that of Bret Harte. In no sense, however, can he be said to have copied that entertaining writer, for his humour is essentially and radically Australian, and the characteristics delineated are as racy of our own soil, as the creations of his American prototype are distinctively Californian.

'How the Circus came to Bullock Town'

'Grumbler's Gully,' 'Poor Joe,' and 'Gentleman George's Bride,' are all of them so redolent of a phase of life that has now almost passed away in Victoria, and are so clearly and sharply outlined, that they may be said to serve a similar purpose to that of a photograph of some whilom important edifice that the march of progress has ordained to destruction.

The "colonial experience" which he gained on Mr. Holt's station did not appear to have been of sufficient value to warrant him in devoting his life to the then lucrative business of rearing sheep. He is very severe on the ordeal he went through, and in one of his sketches, entitled 'A Bush Hut,' he gives an amusingly exaggerated account of the lenten fare and general discomfort of his surroundings. But it was here that he first met Dr. Robert Lewins, who, on a visit to the station, took a great fancy to the youth, whose talents he considered would find a more congenial as well as a more lucrative field, if they were exercised in a more civilized centre. The result of many pleasant conferences with this friend, was to confirm Clarke in his determination to embrace literature as a profession, and to enter it through the avenue of journalism. Through the influence of Dr. Lewins he obtained the offer of employment on the *Argus*, and he turned his back on the attractions of "Bullock Town" to take the initial steps in his chosen career.

The drudgery of routine press work did not impair his originality, or dull the edge of his vivid imagination; indeed, in later years it became notorious that

the vivacity of his correspondence with some of the country papers was more attractive than its accuracy, and this characteristic to some extent militated against his usefulness in the soberer duties of daily journalism.

He was tried for a time as a writer of sub-leaders ; but his facile pen had such a trick of running away with him, the temptation to literary ornamentation and epigrammatic point were so irresistible, that he could not handle serious subjects in a judicially argumentative manner. In fact, he could never be made to subscribe to that journalistic aphorism which propounds that a leading article must have a beginning, a middle, and an end ; and that these must be religiously kept in their proper places. But he supplied, in place of these more easily obtained qualifications, a faculty of humorous moralizing that made the broadsheet more entertaining ; and he early commenced in the columns of the *Australasian* that series of papers by the ' Peripatetic Philosopher,' which brought him prominently into notice—a selection from which was afterwards published in book form. When it is borne in mind that a column or two of philosophizing had always to be ready for the printer every Wednesday night, it is needless to say that they were unequal, for no human being could be always in the mood to make such writing brilliant ; but the volume of selections, with its whimsical dedication and preface, its quaintly original humour, its cynical analysis of society, and its caustic satire of sham and pretence, is a wonderful production for a youth of only one-and-

twenty. The conditions of composition would not permit of that refining process by which Charles Lamb assured his reputation; but in the rapid and lively comments on the follies or sensations of the hour, there is often a deeper vein of philosophy than the "gentle Elia" usually attained; while, in point of vigorous expression and epigrammatic force, they were fully equal to the similar contributions of the recognized prince of English *flâneurs*, George Augustus Sala.

He continued to work the vein which he had opened in the 'Peripatetic Philosopher' for several years, and under various auspices. To this class belong the 'Philosophic Essays by Q.,' the 'Buncle Papers,' and, latterly, the weekly instalment in the *Leader* over the signature of 'Atticus.' The brightness and originality of his style mastered the monotony of the task; but of late years he was too ready to use this convenient form for bitterly caustic attacks upon sections of the community with whom he was not in accord, and even to resort to personalities which could not be defended. It is a notable instance of his want of definite purpose in much that he wrote to note that, while the brunt of his attacks had chiefly to be borne by the well-to-do and smugly complacent—especially that class that measures everything by a monetary standard—some of his keenest satire is aimed at that *laissez faire* Bohemianism which was the cause of all his troubles.

During 1868, in conjunction with Mr. Walstab, he started the *Colonial Monthly*, an ambitious magazine



devoted to original fiction, essays, poetry, and general literature. It had a troubled life of about two years, and resulted in considerable financial loss. In this he published his first novel, 'Long Odds,' a tale of sporting and fast life; in which there is ample evidence that his acquaintance with the scenes depicted was not the result of his own keen observation. It is a well-constructed story, but there is a tendency towards the "superfine" in the style that laid him open to some severe castigation by the critics of the time.

It may safely be said, that but for the reputation which Clarke obtained by his later writings, 'Long Odds' would have shared the fate of thousands of such stories contributed to magazines. It would have been read, or skimmed, and forgotten within a month of its completion. For, truth to tell, while it is sufficiently flowing in narrative, and exciting in adventure, it does not leave any permanent impression of power or genius, such as is produced by the perusal of 'His Natural Life.'

It is a story of passion and plot, turning on the intrigues of conventional scoundrels of the *London Journal* type, and the machinations of horsey *spielers*, and the greedy hangers-on of the great English sport of horse-racing. It is not without force, of the melodramatic kind, but the sentiment is tinselly, and the cynicism of the principal actors repulsive. As a matter of fact, Clarke was dealing with a phase of society of which he really had no experience, and of which his ideas were formed from the talk which he heard from the frequenters

of his father's table when quite a boy. Hence the story is marred by social misconceptions, and even by some grotesque improbabilities in connection with racing matters. If one may judge by Clarke's replies to some of the criticisms on this book, it had been his intention, while laying the scene in England, to make the young squatter, Bob Calverly, his hero, and, in his own words, "to depict with such skill as is permitted to me, the fortunes of a young Australian in that country which young Australians still call Home." But in this he was not successful, for Bob Calverly, an amiable, easy-going, and withal somewhat verdant young man, is the merest foil to the other male characters in the book, who manipulate him as "clay in the hands of the potter." There is nothing very distinctively Australian about him, unless it be that tendency to "blow" which Anthony Trollope regarded as our distinguishing characteristic.

In Hamilton Mackinnon's memoir of Clarke prefixed to the memorial volume, it is stated that he only "wrote a few of the first chapters" of 'Long Odds,' as shortly after its commencement he met with a serious accident in the hunting field, which laid him aside for some months. From other sources, however, it would appear that Mr. G. A. Walstab carried on the story only during the two months in which Clarke was invalided, and that the contributed matter is limited to a few chapters in the middle of the book. If this later information is correct, it must be admitted that the contributor very faithfully performed his work. A recent perusal of the story,

with a view to identify the interpolated matter, fails to discover any break in the continuity or in the style. As originally published in the *Colonial Monthly*, the story was illustrated by about a score of spirited sketches by Mr. Thomas Carrington. It was published in book form in 1869, without any reference to a joint authorship, and has lately been re-issued under the altered title of 'Heavy Odds,' the original title of 'Long Odds' having been appropriated in England by Mr. Hawley Smart for a sporting novel.

In 1869 he started a weekly comic paper, called *Humbug*; but as the field was already fully occupied by *Punch* and its then rival, *Touchstone*, it only lasted for three months, and died of an exhausted chest. It was in this journal that he created some stir amongst the spiritualists in Melbourne, by offering a reward of £50 to any medium who should correctly quote a sentence from 'Ixion in Heaven,' which he had sealed up in an envelope and deposited in the Union Bank. He published the result in a number of ludicrous and preposterously absurd replies he had received from about thirty claimants, and summed up the opinion he held of their pretensions in an admirable article, of which the following quotation will give an idea:

"According to the books, papers, and lectures of this happy sect, the next world is all before them where to choose. For their favoured intellects exists no awe, no reverence. They are taken up into the spheres after dinner, and interchange social chat with the spirits of Shakespeare, Napoleon, Lincoln,

Wellington, and Brougham over a table from which the family joint has but just been removed. For them time and space are both annihilated, the laws of gravitation are controverted, and impossibilities made possible. Chairs fly round the room at their bidding, tables dance jigs to the melody of spirit-played pianos, grave old ottomans unbend from their natural dignity to waltz with merry young fire-screens; and even horsehair sofas, whose creaking joints attest their age and respectability, do not disdain to elevate their castors in the grateful exercise of a country dance. The souls of loved wives, mothers, or sisters make known their presence to bereaved relatives by means of rappings on the kitchen dresser, or wanton destruction of the family crockeryware. Sorrowing survivors are floated in the air and make consolatory pencil-marks on the ceiling; while Voltaire, Gibbon, and Tom Paine appropriately attest their beatified condition by blacking the faces of incredulous mortals, or playing popular melodies on a German concertina. This pleasing condition of society is, we are informed, the first glimmering of the dawn of a glorious hereafter! Our future existence—that life beyond the grave, that holy immortality, a belief in which is the keystone of our faith, our hope on earth, our solace in death—is to be passed in acrobatic antics with articles of domestic furniture, and the passing soul of a dying Christian is to be cheered by the knowledge that he will soon be engaged in performing a nightly series of indifferent conjuring tricks for the amusement of a select tea-party in Melbourne or the suburbs."

The pages of *Humbly* were certainly suitable ground for dealing with such a subject.

During this period, while engaged on various

outside ventures, and busy in collecting the materials for 'His Natural Life,' he continued to contribute short stories and sketches to the *Australasian*, a collection of which, under the title of 'Holiday Peak and other Stories,' was published in 1871. Amongst these will be found some sketches that are most essentially and originally Australian. Who that has travelled much in the bush could fail to recognize in the 'Royal Cobb' the photograph of many a hostelry where he has passed the night; or in Flash Harry, Boss Corkison, or Wallaby Dick the types that he has found lounging under the verandah or in the bar? The gem of the little volume, as before-mentioned, is undoubtedly 'Pretty Dick,' the most perfect little idyll he ever wrote, and distinguished from anything else by its refined pathos and almost reverential delicacy of treatment.

The severance of Marcus Clarke's connection with the *Argus* and *Australasian* was brought about by a violation of journalistic etiquette. He contributed some articles to the *Herald*, animadverting severely on the course taken by the *Argus*, arising out of some dispute with the Victoria Turf Club; and, when brought to book for it, elected to take his stand as a free-lance. From this time forward he wrote voluminously for the other Melbourne papers, was correspondent for several up-country journals, and contributed tales and sketches to the *Australian Journal*, and various Christmas serials.

The position of Melbourne correspondent to the London *Daily Telegraph* was conferred upon him in most flattering terms by the managing proprietor,

in a letter which he was fond of showing to his friends as a specimen of the broad liberality with which this important journal provided for its ubiquitous representation. A few years afterwards a very handsome offer was made to him by the same paper to join their staff of "specials," at a liberal salary; but as it involved proceeding at once to London, and then holding himself in readiness to be despatched, on the instant, to any part of the globe where war, famine, pestilence, earthquake, or any other exceptional condition required special chronicle, he was reluctantly compelled to refuse the overture. His desire for adventure of this character was very strong, but it is extremely doubtful if his physique was equal to the strain that would have been put upon it, and he wisely concluded that a young wife and infantile family might be justly pleaded as a legitimate excuse for declining the honour.

In 1871 he was appointed secretary to the trustees of the Melbourne Public Library, a position which left him ample leisure to pursue his literary labours, and in which he won the especial regard of the late Sir Redmond Barry, while his aptitude and abilities were highly praised by Sir Charles Gavan Duffy. Four years later he succeeded to the office of assistant librarian, a post which he held till his death in 1881.

It would be difficult to imagine any position in the Civil Service of Victoria which could present more congenial surroundings to a young literary aspirant than that which Clarke held for some ten years. His actual hours of duty were light, the

work involved no great mental strain, and was free from anxiety. He had at command an unlimited supply of the raw material from whence to draw inspiration, while scattering his press contributions in facile abundance throughout the Colonies; and he had the advantage of being associated with gentlemen who, in their appreciation of his literary ability, were willing to make allowances for his official shortcomings.

For after his five years of journalistic freedom, he found it very trying to observe regular hours, and to patiently follow routine work. He would at any time have rather penned half-a-dozen columns of a criticism on a new play, than have written up the minutes of a solemn meeting of the trustees, with that dignified diction and verbal accuracy which the precise President, Sir Redmond Barry, required. Many stories are told, some of them probably apocryphal, about the means adopted by the dignified President to check the latent Bohemianism which even the solemnity of the board-room could not quell in the young secretary.

Though he was often in trouble, probably the most serious cause of offence which he gave to the trustees as a body, was the ill-judged and caustic letter which he addressed to the Bishop of Melbourne in the pages of the *Melbourne Review* in 1880. It was in regard to this controversy that Sir Redmond Barry, after seriously pointing out to him the indiscretion of which he had been guilty, added sarcastically, "I think I should require to have some thousands a year of a private income

before I would venture upon writing such an article, on such a subject, and among so punctilious a community as exists here."

His later work, that of assistant librarian, required for its successful achievement in so important an institution as the Melbourne Public Library, a faculty of order and method which he certainly did not possess.

Classification and cataloguing are much more scientific occupations than the general public imagine; indeed, it is doubtful if their intricacies can be successfully mastered without close study and lengthened experience. At the time of the retirement on pension of Mr. Henry Sheffield, the chief librarian, it was recognized that a considerable portion of the work of the institution was in a very chaotic condition, and the trustees had sufficient experience to realize that Marcus Clarke was not the man to restore it to order and precision.

Therefore, when the vacancy had to be filled, he was passed over, and Dr. Bride was selected to re-organize the establishment. This was a great blow to Clarke, for he was calculating upon the enhanced salary of the chief position to extricate him from the financial difficulties in which he had become involved.

This episode must not be taken as confirming the often expressed opinion, that Clarke lacked the necessary industry to make the best use of his undoubted talents. The long list of his acknowledged writings, his extensive anonymous work as a journalist, and his official duties at the Public



Library for fully ten years out of so brief a career, give an emphatic denial to this allegation. He wanted method in his industry, and he lacked the close application which is necessary to work out more enduring results; but he was foolishly prodigal of himself, and frittered away energies that, carefully husbanded, would have made him a far greater posthumous reputation.

The whole of his literary work was accomplished within about fourteen years, and in that time he produced two complete novels; upwards of thirty shorter tales and sketches; a volume of 'Old Tales of a Young Country,' in which he dressed in pleasant diction some of the more notable of the musty records of the early settlements; about a dozen dramatic works, including original comedies and burlesques, and adaptations from the French; several pamphlets on topics of the day; and an occasional foolish 'flight into the realms of theology. Concurrently with these indications of mental activity, it must be remembered that he had for some portion of the time daily journalistic work, and for the remainder his routine duties in Sir Redmond Barry's great foundation, whence he was in the habit of sending his contributions to the London *Daily Telegraph*, and to the leading papers in Victoria and the other Colonies.

He wrote many capable review articles on such divergent subjects as 'The Comtist Philosophy,' 'Balzac's Place in Literature,' and 'Gustave Doré and Modern Art.' His article on Lord Beaconsfield's novels is one of the most outspoken and scathing

criticisms ever penned about that gilded genius; but it is so permeated by the writer's anti-Semitic feeling, and the bitterness engendered thereby, that it ignores all the canons of good taste as applied to review work, and leaves an unpleasant impression of bullying.

As a dramatic writer he was prolific and versatile, and though none of his productions took a very strong hold upon play-goers, they were generally recognized as possessing both constructive skill and smartness of dialogue. His first essay in this direction was a pantomime at the Royal, 'Little Bo-Peep,' in 1870; and three years later he wrote the most noticeable one that had then been produced in Melbourne, 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.' But he aimed at higher things, and 'Plot,' produced in 1873, had a fairly successful run of some weeks. He dramatized Reade's 'Foul Play,' and adapted Molière's 'Bourgeois Gentilhomme' with admirable results; and he also wrote two or three other dramatic pieces, and the libretto for some musical compositions. His last completed work of this kind was the sparkling little comedy-drama called 'A Daughter of Eve,' written expressly for his wife's re-appearance on the stage, and in which she achieved a pronounced success at the Bijou Theatre.

Marcus Clarke would hardly have claimed to call himself a poet; indeed, in a remarkable pamphlet which he published on 'The Future Australian Race' he has this passage:—

"Genius is to the physiologist but another form of scrofula, and to call a man a poet is to physiologically insult the mother who bore him. When

Mr. Edmund Yates termed one of his acquaintances 'a scrofulous Scotch poet,' he intended to be personal, but he was only tautological."

But, though he might not lay claim to so doubtful a distinction, he was assuredly a very clever versifier, and he shone at his best in those songs of society of which W. M. Praed is probably the typical representative. His efforts in this direction are found scattered through the *Australasian*, in various poets' corners, and in Christmas annuals and other serials. A charming little poem called 'Ten Years Ago,' and beginning:

"Dost thou remember the old garden where  
We used to steal,  
To build our silly castles in the air,  
My pale Lucille?  
I was thy knight; and thou my love, my queen,  
No shame didst know,  
For had we not played, babies on the green,  
Ten years ago?"

treats of the same theme as Praed's 'Belle of the Ball,' and handles it with far more poetical tenderness.

He had a great facility for parody and burlesque, and the paper entitled 'Horace in the Bush' contains some specimens of rare ingenuity in decking time-honoured old rhymes in new garments. 'Bill Jinks,' a romance in the American manner, is an Australian version of 'Jim Bludso,' and tells the story of a roystering, drinking desperado, sacrificing his life to save an old woman at a fire, with that bewildering mixture of the horrible, the profane,

and the heroic, which has become popular in America only within the last decade.

The following lines, written in a friend's album in 1869, have a Béranger-like ring in their rhythmic flow, and show a skilful use of "apt alliteration's artful aid." They are at the same time eminently characteristic in sentiment of that assumption of Bohemianism in which he was wont to delight :

#### IN A LADY'S ALBUM.

"What can I write in thee, O dainty book,  
About whose daintiness faint perfume lingers—  
Into whose pages dainty ladies look,  
And turn thy dainty leaves with daintier fingers ?

Fitter my ruder muse for ruder song,  
My scrawling quill to coarser paper matches ;  
My voice, in laughter raised too loud and long,  
Is hoarse and cracked with singing tavern catches.

No melodies have I for ladies' ear,  
No roundelays for jocund lads and lasses—  
But only brawlings born of bitter beer,  
And chorussed with the clink and clash of glasses !

So, tell thy mistress, pretty friend, for me,  
I cannot do her 'hest,' for all her frowning,  
While dust and ink are but polluting thee,  
And vile tobacco-smoke thy leaves embrowning.

Thou breathest purity and humble worth—  
The simple jest, the light laugh following after.  
I will not jar upon thy modest mirth  
With harsher jest, or with less gentle laughter.

So, some poor tavern hunter, steeped in wine,  
With staggering footsteps thro' the streets returning,  
Seeing, through gathering glooms, a sweet light shine  
From household lamp in happy window burning,

May pause an instant in the wind and rain  
To gaze on that sweet scene of love and duty,  
But turns into the wild wet night again,  
Lest his sad presence mar its holy beauty.

“*May 22, 1869.*”

As a pamphleteer, the most noticeable *brochure* to which Marcus Clarke put his name was ‘The Future Australian Race,’ published in 1877. Starting with Buckle’s postulate, that the quality of a race is determined by its physical surroundings—practically by food and climate—he applies it in a curious physiognomical study to our English ancestors, and projects the ascertained result through ourselves to our children. The imposing array of authorities cited in the portion relating to our ancestors indicates laborious examination of rare old collections of prints and biographies, which his official position no doubt facilitated; but the result of the labour is marred by the tendency to grotesque exaggeration in estimating results :

“Given the price of the cheapest food in a country,” he says, “and the average registration of the thermometer, and it is easy to return a fair general estimate of the national characteristics. I say a general estimate, because other causes—the height of mountains, the width of rivers, the proximity of volcanoes—induce particular results. But the intelligent mind, possessed of information on the two points of food and climate, can confidently sum up—first, the bodily vigour; second, the mental vigour; third, the religion; fourth, the political constitution of a nation.”

The result of his analysis of all the forces working amongst the population of this continent is summed up thus :

“The conclusion of all this is, therefore, that in another hundred years the average Australasian will be a tall, coarse, strong-jawed, greedy, pushing, talented man, excelling in swimming and horsemanship. His religion will be a form of Presbyterianism ; his national policy a democracy tempered by the rate of exchange. His wife will be a thin, narrow woman, very fond of dress and idleness, caring little for her children, but without sufficient brain power to sin with zest. In five hundred years, unless recruited from foreign nations, the breed will be wholly extinct ; but in that five hundred years it will have wholly changed the face of nature, and swallowed up all our contemporary civilization.”

It is a singular fact, that while apparently estimating the effect of all the social and hereditary forces, and proclaiming this definitive conclusion, he has entirely omitted to take into account the result of that universal, free, and compulsory education from which we are expecting such magnificent developments in our posterity as an equivalent for the stupendous outlay we are incurring on an experiment.

His controversy with the Bishop of Melbourne, published under the head of ‘Civilization without Delusion,’ and now out of print, needs but a passing notice. It was a vigorous but somewhat flippant attack upon the Christian evidences, on the old lines, and had nothing new in the arguments beyond the satirical force of their setting. He failed to

touch the weightier portions of the Bishop's reply, and, under the garb of an ironical deference, assailed the motives and the intellect of his opponent most unfairly. It cannot be too widely known, as an instance of the Bishop's generous tolerance, that he caused to be conveyed to Mrs. Clarke, on the day of her husband's funeral, the expression of his deep sympathy with her affliction, and forwarded a handsome donation to the treasurer of the memorial fund.

Amidst all this multitudinous writing—journalistic, dramatic, poetical, philosophical, theological, and historical—Marcus Clarke worked at his most appropriate vocation as a novelist; and it is on his *magnum opus* in this field, 'His Natural Life,' that his fame will chiefly rest. It is a novel of great power, full of intense and exciting interest, but withal so permeated by vivid pictures of hellish passion, official brutality, and fiendish injustice, that the blood tingles as the reader takes in the horrible surroundings, and the mind is benumbed with the pain of realizing that it is no exaggeration of the truth. The dehumanizing effect upon the officials, of the exercise of arbitrary, irresponsible despotism is not less revolting to properly constituted minds than the bestial viciousness which the dreary, desolate hopelessness and gross tyrannical injustice engendered in the miserable, cowed outcasts who were thrust outside the pale of human rights. Could a writer of Marcus Clarke's ability have placed this narrative before the British public fifty years ago, and secured for it a wide circulation, and the

vouchers of official verification, it would have done more to wipe out this blot upon our civilization than the laboured efforts of the Howard Society and all other kindred associations. It would have aroused an outburst of feeling that had swept like an avalanche over official indifference or obstruction, and rendered the continuance of such ghastly horrors an impossibility. A vast amount of labour was expended by Marcus Clarke in collecting the materials for this story, in searching the convict records, and familiarizing himself with the scenery, incidents, and regulations of that physically lovely, but morally hideous, settlement of Port Arthur. How faithfully he reproduced his impressions the story bears admirable witness; and the minute fidelity of his descriptions is the more remarkable in one who was generally so ready to idealize when it saved trouble. The examination of the official registers of the prison settlement—the bare lists of *authorized* punishments, the dealings with “refractories,” the outbreaks, the executions—was a long task, distasteful enough to most men, but possessing a strange fascination for him, and revealing conditions of unspeakable horror, such as he assured some of his friends he dared not commit to print.

Terribly depressing, nay, almost revolting as is the burden of this most powerful romance, it masters the reader by its enthralling interest; and the care with which all its incidents are worked out seems to make him a spectator of the action. Moncure Conway, when on a visit to Australia, informed the



writer that he first met with the book on board an Atlantic mail-steamer, and it so fascinated him that he could think of little else during the voyage. He declared that he could not think of returning to Europe without visiting Port Arthur and the surrounding districts so graphically described, and when he did so, he took the novel with him as a sort of guide-book. Many prominent men in literature and art have borne their testimony to the exceptional power and interest of the story, while many pages could be filled by extracts from the commendatory criticisms of the English press.

It is needless here to attempt any analysis of the story, since it is within the reach of all, and must be read in its entirety to be appreciated in its power and masterfulness of construction. It was originally contributed to the *Australian Journal*, and published in monthly instalments; but in 1873 Clarke thoroughly revised it, making considerable alterations in the earlier chapters and entirely recasting the *dénouement*. It was greatly strengthened in intensity and tragic power by the alterations, and was published in the revised form in London and Melbourne in 1874. The defects of the story in its original form were pointed out to Clarke, when he submitted it for the approval of his literary Mentor, Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, who, an admitted master of English composition, took a most friendly interest in the young author's work. The transition which he made of the hero, from an ordinary offender to an innocent man wrongly convicted, and who suffered his life-long punishment rather than reveal

a secret which affected his mother's honour, raised the interest and the sympathies of the reader to a higher plane. At the same time the substituted tragic ending produced a climax strictly in keeping with all that led up to it,—and did not outrage the probabilities, like the first account of the hero's escape and subsequent participation in the melodramatic fiasco of the Ballarat riots.

No conditions can be imagined more unfavourable to good literary work than to commence the publication of a novel in a serial, before much of it is written. In Clarke's case, chapter after chapter of 'His Natural Life' was produced under stress of pressure for "copy," while the printer's devil was literally sitting on his doorstep. Too often the stimulant of payment in advance had been applied to keep him up to the mark, and altogether the proprietors of the *Australian Journal* had an anxious time in extracting their monthly instalments.

The judicious alterations suggested by Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, and the liberal excisions which the author's own good taste supplied, gave strength and completeness to the work, and when it was issued in London by Bentley, in the orthodox three-volume form, its success was assured and immediate.

It has been extensively reprinted in America, and translated into German and some other European languages; while English, American, and foreign reviewers have accorded it critical notices of uniformly laudatory character.

Of his minor novels, 'Long Odds' has been already noticed. 'Twixt Shadow and Shine,' an Australian

story of Christmas, published in 1875, is a genial, lively sketch, the scene of which is laid on the shores of Western Port Bay, and in which we are introduced to Gipsy George and Harry-my-friend, with strong incentives to be deeply interested in their honest love-making. This tale was always very popular amongst his press companions, because most of the characters are travesties of his associates at the literary club, at one time facetiously known as the "Golgotha," but now developed into "The Yorick." To those who, from the inside of the charmed circle, recognized the originals of Mr. Jerke, Mr. Corboy, Mr. Scrimminger, and Erasmus Rumbelow, it was most "excellent fooling"; but, doubtless, the public thought that the eccentricities of these individuals rather retarded than helped the free flow of the associated story.

'Four Stories High,' published in 1877, and dedicated to W. S. Lyster, was another Christmas venture, in which four separate tales, ranging from the all-surrounding pathos of 'The Poor Artist' to the burlesque absurdity of 'King Billy's Breeches,' are united by a slender thread of critical conversation.

'The Mystery of Major Molineux,' originally contributed to a suburban journal, is a weird, fragmentary narrative of a tortured human mind continually verging on insanity, and has a gloomily tragic ending that oppresses and confuses the reader. It revels in an unwholesome field, but in its amplitude of physiological details, its notebook-like record of sequence, and its absence of sentiment, it forcibly recalls some of the more ghastly stories of Edgar

Allan Poe. It was the last completed effort of his imagination, and while, in its familiar references to the literature of mental disease, and the bold attempt to place a finger on the exact physical irregularity that caused it, there is a wide advance displayed in the writer's reading and knowledge, yet it is singularly like the weird, uncanny style of his first juvenile effort at fiction, which he called 'The Apothecary of Mantua.'

The unfinished—indeed, hardly commenced—novel of 'Felix and Felicitas,' on which he was engaged at the time of his death, has not been made public. A lady, writing from London to the *Australasian*, speaks of having read the preliminary chapters which had been forwarded to Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, and having been charmed by their eloquence and power.

Of Marcus Clarke outside the arena of his writings there remains little to be said. And yet one of the most noticeable features that has been developed in connection with modern authorship, is the desire manifested by readers to know something more of the writers who interest them than can be gathered from the product of their pens. It is not a new idea, for nearly two centuries ago Joseph Addison wrote in the introductory paper to the 'Spectator': "A reader seldom peruses a book with pleasure until he knows whether the writer of it be a black or fair man,—of a mild or choleric disposition,—married or a bachelor,—with other particulars of the like nature that conduce very much to the right understanding of an author."

Probably the desire for this kind of information received a stimulus from the devoted labours of the inimitable Boswell, whose garrulous volumes are far more interesting reading than anything his great idol produced. The enormous circulation of Forster's 'Life of Dickens,' and of Froude's unpleasant *post-mortem* on Carlyle, evidence the popular taste in this direction. But it is now becoming the fashion for writers who have attained any measure of popularity to anticipate this posthumous treatment by submitting themselves to the ubiquitous Interviewer. Under the capable manipulation of an officer of this newly-founded literary Inquisition, they describe their home life and its surroundings,—their favourite pastimes and pet antipathies,—their methods of composition,—and sometimes the quality of their literary emoluments, with a glamour which an outsider might fail to supply. All of which makes excellent and readable "copy" for the swarm of illustrated magazines that jostle each other in the race for popularity.

Not to be altogether out of so prevalent a fashion, this article may fitly conclude with some slight reminiscences of Marcus Clarke in his individual capacity.

In person he was below the average stature, and this, combined with his slight build and juvenile style of dress, gave him a boyish appearance which he never outgrew. The face was distinctly handsome, with regular features and noticeably large and expressive eyes. When in repose they conveyed an impression of melancholy and contemplation, but

when Clarke was in a genially humorous vein—for he could be savagely humorous sometimes—they sparkled with fun, and added materially to his great success as a *raconteur*. Amongst his press associates at the Yorick Club, or other festive place of meeting, he was easily first in telling a good story, for whatever the original basis may have been, he rarely failed to garnish it with some ludicrous associations that immensely improved it. His imagination was too active to be limited by the stern necessities of facts.

Like Charles Lamb, he had occasionally a most pronounced stammer in his speech, and although in ordinary conversation he managed to keep it under control, it often pulled him up suddenly when he got a little excited in talking. On the whole, however, it could hardly be regarded as a serious defect, for it often gave unexpected point to some of his humorous sayings.

With all his many-sidedness as a writer, he had a singular ineptitude for politics. To use his own reckless words, there was nothing he despised so much as Protection, unless it was Free Trade! Judged by his Buncle correspondence, 'Peripatetic Philosopher,' and kindred papers, he seemed to think that politicians as a class passed their time in posturing to the masses, and that the element of personal advantage was the great motive power. His frank avowal of his conviction that corruption was rampant in every department of the State, often found its way into print, notwithstanding the watchful supervision of editors, whose seats he contrived to make more than usually thorny.

His sympathies went out mainly to the men in his own walk in life, especially to the impecunious members of the brotherhood. He repeatedly and earnestly tried to help Kendall, when that erratic genius fell upon evil times in Melbourne. He was devotedly attached to Gordon, whose verses he used frequently to quote, whose friendship he greatly prized, and whose tragic ending quite overwhelmed him with grief. Amongst the most intimate friends of his press days were Alfred Telo, a brother journalist, with whom for a time he kept house; G. A. Walstab, novelist and pressman; Dr. Aubrey Bowen, and Dr. Patrick Molony. Those of them that still survive hold his memory in tenderest regard.

Many stories are current in press circles about his thoughtless and impulsive generosity when his feelings were stirred, and some of them irresistibly remind one of the similar anecdotes related of Oliver Goldsmith. In one sense Clarke certainly did not value money, and nothing but the absolute inability to raise it could restrain him from a liberal expenditure, in which he was always ready to share his windfall with any less fortunate brother of the craft. If he chanced to have the cash in his pocket—not by any means the normal condition—he would promptly respond to any plaintive application, without inquiring too closely whether the cause was a good or a bad one. On one occasion, when about to take his modest evening meal at the old *café* then kept by Spiers and Pond, he was accosted by a well-known old barrister, whose life alternated between the Benevolent Asylum and the streets, a man of singu-

larly brilliant intellect, and "nobody's enemy but his own." He told Clarke that he had left the Asylum, and had been without food all day. "Well," said Clarke, "I am just going to have a chop and a glass of ale, and as my homage to learning, allow me to offer you the same." But when the old gentleman got the *menu*, he did not care for a chop. He would take a little soup, a cutlet with the proper appurtenances to follow, some sweets, and cheese and salad. He could not drink beer, a small bottle of claret was necessary, and surely his entertainer would stand a cigar. Clarke, whose intentions had been bounded by a modest half-crown, saw his last sovereign rapidly melting away, but fortunately he had just enough money to pay the bill, and he left his guest regally enjoying his smoke. As he went out, another member of the press club came in, and seeing the old gentleman sitting in such unwonted state said, "Well, old boy, what is it makes you look so glum amidst all these gorgeous surroundings?" "Glum," replied the other, "I feel absolutely wretched! Fancy me, a Master of Arts of Trinity College, Cambridge, a Benchler of the Inner Temple, and with a world-wide literary reputation, indebted for my dinner to that little cad who has just gone out!"

When the story got round to the Yorick Club, it is needless to say that the sympathies were all with Clarke. As an offset to the sympathetic side of his nature, it must be admitted that Clarke was also a good hater, while his dislikes to individuals, as well as to classes, were often based on most inadequate grounds. Some of his most cherished antipathies



were to men with whom at one time he had been on terms of friendly intimacy. In his often-expressed contempt for and pretended inability to understand "business," he vents his severest irony on business men, and it was towards the well-to-do of that class, who believed in attending to their own affairs, that he presented his most aggressive side. Not content with the favourite Bohemian denunciation of Philistinism, he always affected to see in success in life the spoliation of some one else, some victim to be pitied.

"A man of business," says one of his heroes in 'Four Stories High,' "is one who becomes possessed of other people's money without bringing himself within the purview of the law." Even used in a Pickwickian sense, this is a very uncharitable remark, but the sentiment permeates many of his sketches. Indeed it would not be difficult to build up a ready estimate of his own character, by taking many of these weekly essays of his as seriously autobiographical; allowances, of course, being made for his extravagant over-statement.

In 1868, about a year after he had joined the staff of the *Argus*, he met with an alarming accident in the hunting-field, being thrown, and afterwards struck on the back part of the head by the horse's hoof, resulting in a serious fracture of the skull. The gravity of the case may be estimated from the fact that he remained unconscious for more than a week, and his recovery was mainly due to the incessant watchful care of Dr. Aubrey Bowen, who, in consultation with Dr. Fitzgerald, succeeded in literally

bringing him back to life. It was some months before he was able to actively return to brain work, and there is no doubt that, under certain conditions, his mental powers were liable to be temporarily impaired as a consequence of the accident. He was married, in 1869, to Miss Marion Dunn, the second daughter of the late Mr. John Dunn, the veteran Australian comedian. It was early to assume the responsibilities of the head of a family, for Clarke was barely twenty-three years of age, and his experiences in Melbourne had not been of a kind to lead him to any exalted idea of the sanctity of the domestic hearth. Much of his work involved the consumption of the midnight oil, and he was an inveterate sacrificer at the Nicotian shrine. His comrades belonged to that rollicking Bohemian fraternity whose "high jinks" he has sketched so amusingly in "Twixt Shadow and Shine." He had never been a willing lounge in ladies' drawing-rooms, and as a rule seemed rather oppressed by the restraints of mixed society. His notions of expenditure could never be made to fit into the actualities of his income, and hence his financial position was, from start to finish, an entangled enigma which he finally gave up even attempting to solve.

It is not surprising, therefore, to learn, that the marriage ceremony had been actually concluded before he set out to look for lodgings wherein he might bestow himself and his bride. The determination of two young people to be happy was sufficient, at any rate for the time, to overcome such prosaic difficulties as the "cursed lack of pence," and

they settled down to work and domesticity. It was about two years after his marriage that Clarke was appointed secretary at the Public Library, and during those two years he did some of his most important work, including the original version of the story of 'His Natural Life.'

With his appointment to a congenial position, on a fair salary, largely supplemented by outside literary work, it might have been supposed that he would have found peace from the clamorous demands of creditors. But he had so heedlessly entangled himself in the toils of the usurers, probably without any conception of what 60 per cent. really implied, that he worked for years to pay the interest to his bondmasters, until it seemed that, after all his labour, there was barely bread-and-cheese for himself, and no reduction in the weight of the oppressive incubus. The temporary relief of further borrowing was too facile a method to be rejected, and he never allowed his present pleasure to be overclouded by anticipating the carking cares of repayment. This Skimpolian proclivity was apparently incurable, and while during his bachelor days it brought only the semblance of trouble on himself, it became a very real and harassing anxiety when his responsibilities were increased by a wife and family.

If it is fair to attach blame to inherent and constitutional feebleness of will, Clarke must bear the blame of this unfortunate position of his affairs, as he had to bear the anxiety and discomfort which resulted from it. Some of his press friends, writing in extenuation of this radical weakness in his

character, sought to transfer the responsibility elsewhere. In the Memorial volume published in 1884 the following statement occurs :

“ While thus rapidly rising in the rank of Australia's *littérateurs*, Marcus Clarke was unfortunately induced, by the foolish advice of friends who felt flattered by his company, to live at a rate far exceeding his income. In other words, he became a member of the Melbourne Club, and, tempted by its glitter, threw himself into its extravagant ways with all the force of his impulsive Bohemian nature—and, naturally, got involved in debt. From this there was no recourse but to borrow, and so the presence of the usurer was sought. Thus commenced that course of life which, after a few years of ceaseless worry, brought the brilliant man of genius, with the brightest of prospects before him—long ere his prime—to the grave, broken-hearted and overcome by the weight of his troubles. Surely those who led him into the extravagances, men his seniors in years and experience, must bear their share of responsibility for the dark end to so bright a beginning.”

This statement is wholly indefensible. Clarke was a member of the Melbourne Club for a short period, having been elected about six weeks before his marriage; but to talk of the glittering attractions of that abode of all the conservative conventional proprieties having led him astray, is simply preposterous. As a rule young men find its dulness rather oppressive, and certainly it has never given any indications of developing fastness or Bohemianism. It is true that amongst its members he would necessarily be brought into association with men

immensely richer than himself in this world's goods. But what society could he have mixed in where this would not have been the case? Unhappily, he needed no imaginary seducers to lead him into the vortex of extravagant expenditure, and the foolish friends, "his seniors in years and experience," are but a mythical impersonation of his own weak will and self-indulgence. In August 1874, when his insolvency was made public, he was called upon for his resignation, but by the good offices of some of his friends on the Board of Trustees, this was cancelled on obtaining his certificate of discharge from the Court. But he was constitutionally unable to benefit by the bitter experience of this painful episode, and having again resorted to the palliative remedy of the money-lenders, his estate was once more sequestrated in July 1881, when he was practically on his death-bed.

A thrill of generous sympathy with his widow and six young children ran through the community when his untimely death was announced, and took practical form in making provision for their immediate requirements by generous contributions from all sorts and conditions of men. Many of his sketches were collected and published in book form, with resulting large circulations, and two successive editions of a Memorial volume were issued by subscription for the benefit of his family.

Had Marcus Clarke possessed, even in a moderate degree, a sense of the importance of prudential considerations, his life would have been a happier one for himself and for those he has left. The

ability to control his expenditure within Mr. Micawber's well-defined lines would have given him equal strength to husband his intellectual powers, and have enabled him to leave some more enduring evidences of his talent than the evanescent contributions which he scattered so freely. But, alas! while always a worker, and wearing out his powers under high pressure, he was as prodigal of his intellect as of its more prosaic results, and fell by the wayside in the harness which he donned in hope and pride, but which, ere the end came, galled him sorely.

THE END.



5 post,

1 pl,

2 wgs,



